PRIVATE EYE

No. 1214
11 July –
24 July 2008
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BLACK DAY FOR BORIS

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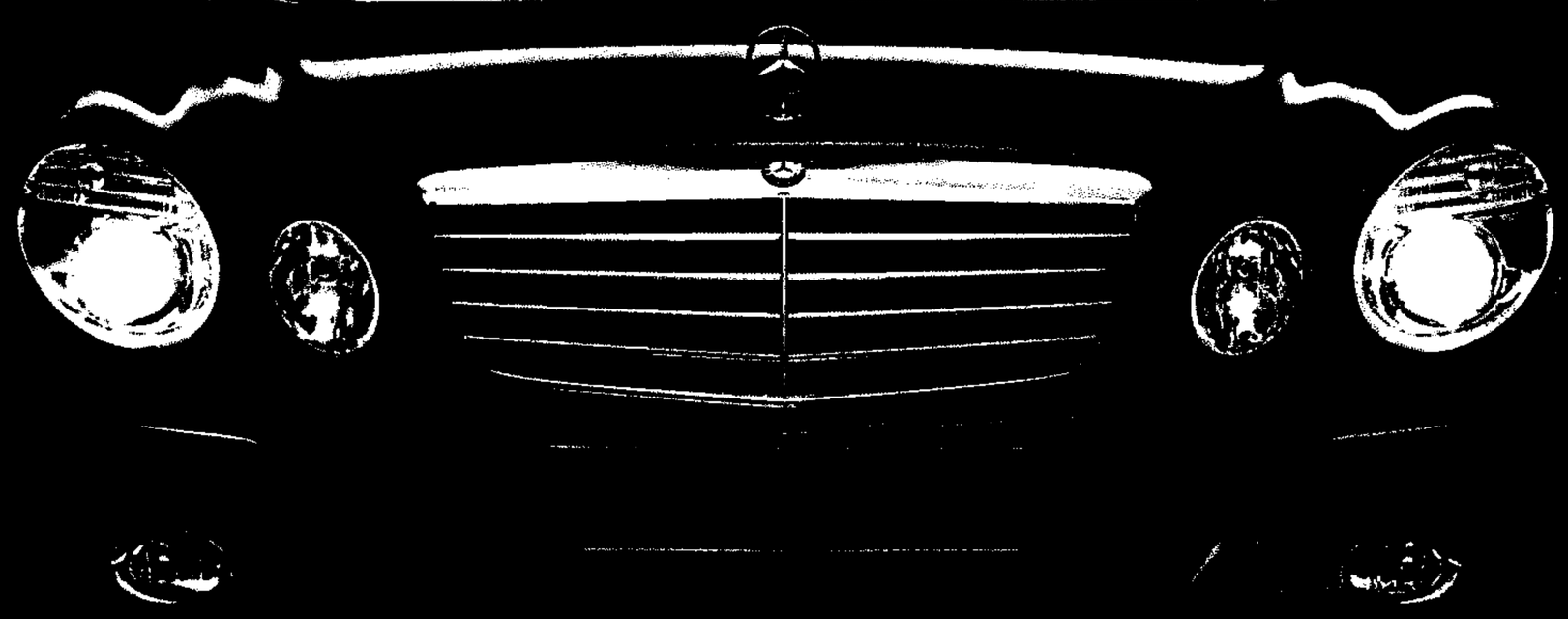

Mercedes-Benz

E220 CDI Avantgarde with automatic trans[illegible]

Monthly payment**	£329	On the road price
Customer deposit	£6,499	Total charge for credit
Retailer deposit contribution*	£3,448	Amount of credit
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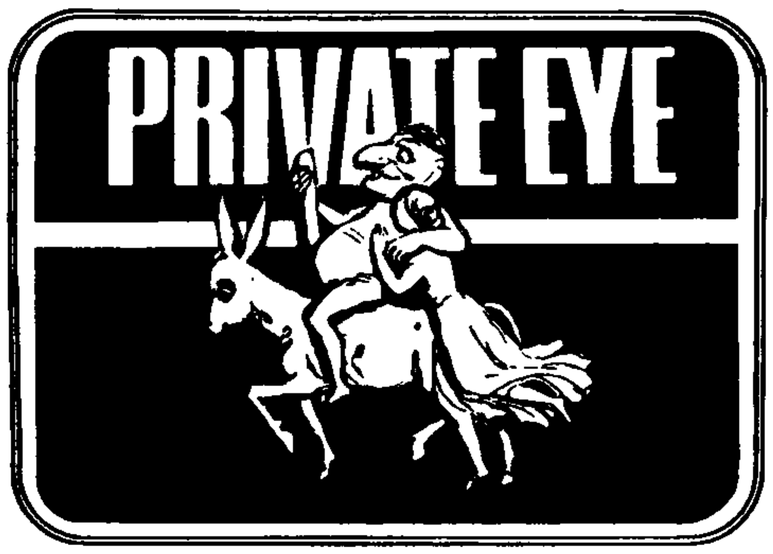
Official government fuel consumption figures (MPG/Litres Per 100Km) for the E220 CDI Avantgarde: urban 31.0/9.1, extra urban 52.3/5.4, combined 42.2/6.7. CO_2 emissions (g/km): 177. Model shown is a Mercedes-Benz E220 CDI Avantgarde. Total price: £33,625 on the road, including optional automatic transmission at £1,490. (Price includes VAT, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, number plates, first registration fee and a full tank of fuel.) Prices correct at time of going to print.**Based on a Mercedes-Benz E220 CDI Avantgarde with automatic transmission on a Mercedes-Benz Agility agreement.*The Retailer contribution is towards the deposit and is only available with this finance offer. †Payable if you exercise the option to purchase the car. ‡Includes optional purchase payment and purchase activation fee. Credit provided subject to status by Mercedes-Benz Financial Services UK Ltd, MK7 8ND. Vehicles must be registered between 01/07/08 and 30/09/08. Terms and conditions apply. We reserve the right not to allow this subsidised rate to be used in conjunction with any other offer.



Ray of sunshine

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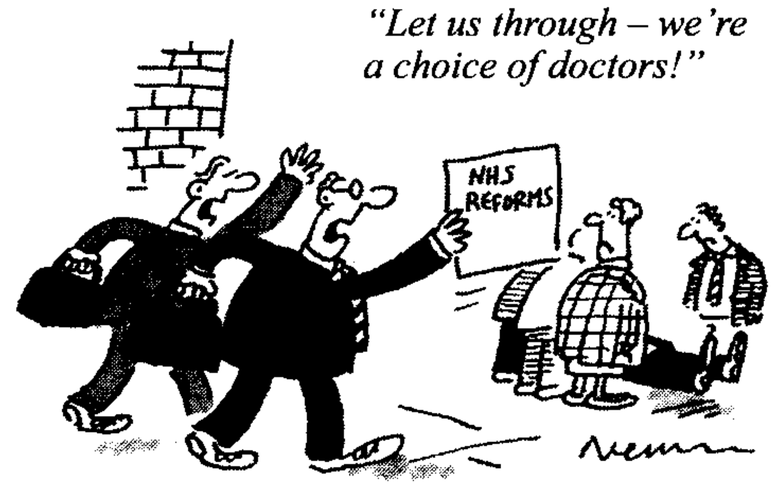

ACCORDING to the *Sunday Times* last weekend, the new mayor of London was "catastrophically careless not to have found out more about [Ray] Lewis".

Monday's *Guardian*, rejoicing that "Boris Johnson has fallen flat on his face", found it incredible that he "failed to carry out even the most basic checks" before recruiting Lewis as one of his deputies. "London voters will ask why the Conservative party was so ready to place its trust in such a man [as Lewis]".

Fleet Street would never be so gullible. Er, except for the catastrophically careless *Sunday Times*, which celebrated Lewis's appointment two months ago with an awestruck 2,000-word profile of this "ordained minister" who had also been "the governor of Woodhill Prison". (Not true, as the *Eye* pointed out at the time, the Ministry of Justice having told us that Lewis was at "the most junior level of management for a very brief period of time".)

The *Grauniad*, without carrying out "even the most basic checks", ran an equally gushing profile on 9 May. "The former prison boss and one-time church minister has no time for formalities – or insincerity," it raved. "Many see Lewis's appointment as a shrewd move by Johnson." Can this be the same *Grauniad* which now says it was obvious all along that Lewis was "a poor choice for a big job"?

NHS AT 60

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Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 870 Fax: 01795 414 555.
Web: www.subsonline.co.uk
Email: private-eye@servicehelpline.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£28 per annum. Europe and Eire £34. Airmail (rest of world) £38.
Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR.
Email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com
Display: 020 7878 2366 **Classified:** 020 7240 9129

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ. **Distributed** by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

ABC

DESPITE the *Eye's* reminders, Gordon Brown remains oblivious to the irony of blaming the banks' off-balance sheet jiggery-pokery for current financial turmoil after a decade of saddling public services with hundreds of billions in PFI liabilities precisely so they could stay off his books.

He was at it again before the Commons liaison committee last week when Labour's Barry Sheerman raised the consequences of "an incompetent, reckless and downright greedy banking system". Could anything be done?

What was needed, replied Gordon, was "transparency of balance sheets so that these off-balance sheet activities cannot be recorded in the way that they were before and they have got to be on-balance sheet".

MPs were far too polite to mention the incompetence, recklessness and greed of 11 years of New Labour PFI.

THE last *Eye*'s exposure of the Ministry of Defence's concerns over its own plans to privatise defence training at an academy in South Wales – including the risk of failing to "meet requirements of operational commands" as well as being unaffordable – may finally have prompted some long-overdue scrutiny of the deal.

As hundreds of jobs will be lost at Cosford in the west Midlands under the scheme to hand military training to the Metrix consortium, local MPs have pounced on the *Eye*'s report. Tory member for the Wrekin, Mark Pritchard, told the *Shropshire Star* that he had called for a National Audit Office investigation before it's too late.

"These high-level secret discussions have confirmed what I have been saying for the last three years: that a move from RAF Cosford would put frontline operations at risk; it would be at huge extra cost to UK taxpayers with little tangible return; and that the contract figures do not add up," said Pritchard.

Labour MP for Telford David Wright has also weighed in, pointing to concerns about "whether the defence training contract can be delivered". Even the MoD now admits that talks on the contract, not yet signed, are "taking longer than expected". With £4bn-worth of aircraft carriers to pay for, something in the defence budget will have to give. The £11bn PFI contract might be a good start.

• *Top Brassed Off: In the Back, p. 26*

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£1,325,700 Bonuses awarded to senior civil servants at MoD last year

£285,000 Maximum compensation available to serving soldiers injured in Iraq or Afghanistan

• We've installed motion-sensitive lights in all toilets at the Feltham support office.

Boots Pulse

THE "highest standard of corporate behaviour" that Tesco boasts of doesn't, the grocer has admitted, prevent it avoiding the taxes that pay for Britain's schools, hospitals and other public services on which it and everybody else relies.

The scene for the admission was a tetchy procedural hearing in the high court last week on Tesco's libel claim against the *Guardian* over mistaken claims that it had avoided £1bn in corporation tax (even though the paper did correctly report the supermarket's substantial dodging of "stamp duty land tax").

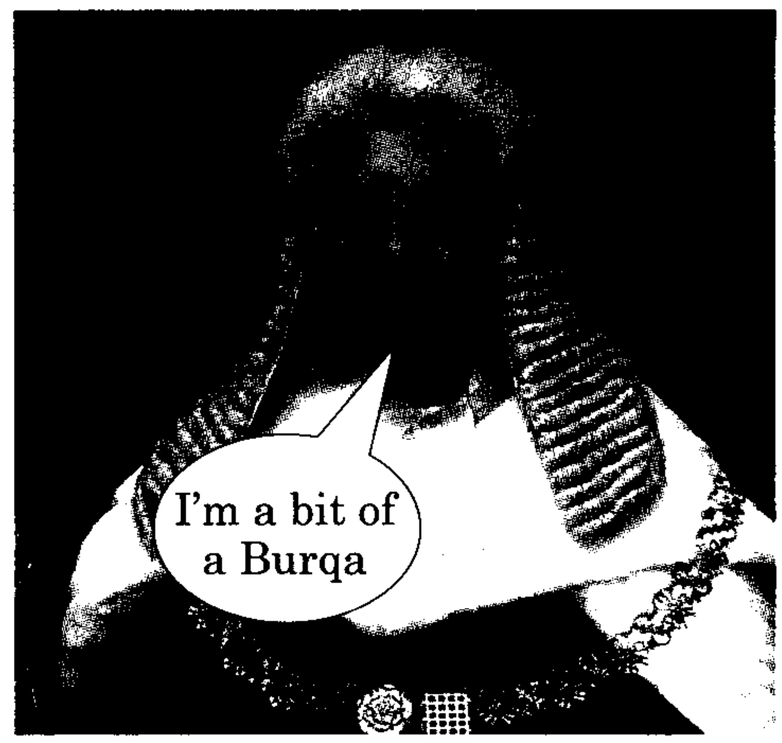
The spat has intensified since *Private Eye* exposed two offshore schemes undertaken by the supermarket that were among the most blatant cases of corporation tax avoidance imaginable (*Eyes* 1211 and 1212). The *Eye's* revelations now form a key plank of the *Guardian*'s defence against both the libel claim and an extraordinary allegation of "malicious falsehood" levelled at editor Alan Rusbridger, provoking the supermarket's QC Adrienne Page to complain: "Every time *Private Eye* publishes something about the tax position of Tesco, the *Guardian* leap on it and want to insert it in their defence."

Yet confronted with the reality of Tesco as a determined tax avoider and the *Guardian*'s claim that its "ethical stance is in fact in terms of its true approach to tax avoidance a sham", Page was forced to admit: "Tesco has not claimed an ethical stance on tax avoidance… They do engage in tax planning."

But, as she pointed out, the company's action is bolstered by libel law under which what matters is "the reputation you actually have, not the reputation you deserve". And with tax avoidance a notoriously secretive business, Tesco can argue it didn't have much of a reputation as a tax avoider when the *Guardian* published its stories earlier this year – even if it has been comprehensively exposed now.

Not that chief executive Sir Terry Leahy (also a leading light on Gordon Brown's "business council") is prepared to admit anything to his shareholders. He even told his company's AGM a fortnight ago: "Tesco is not a tax avoider. We are one of the largest tax payers."

TOP JUDGE BACKS SHARIA LAW



"Could we borrow a cup of money?"

NEWS

NEWS that Sats exams wouldn't be marked in time for this week's results day due to "technical issues" was no surprise to markers, who have found exam board ETS to be just as disaster-prone as its predecessors.

ETS already had to up the amount paid per paper to maths markers because it was taking them so long to enter the marks into the "online mark capture system". And that was when the system was working: computer glitches resulted in long periods when they couldn't enter marks at all. As the weeks ticked by into June, ETS introduced a further desperate incentive scheme, offering £100 to any markers who managed to complete their scripts by the 23 June deadline.

With just days to go, ETS was phoning the by now very disgruntled markers and pleading with them to join the last-minute "marking panels", working all day in large venues. This is despite measures introduced by ETS to speed things up, after former SATs contractor Edexcel regularly missed the deadline. The measures include testing the competence of markers using online sample papers, rather than checking their marking of actual papers.

A SAD setback for our old friend Barbara Thomas Judge, chairman of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, who somehow finds the time to sit on the board of 40 other companies and institutions.

One of these is the property firm Quintain Estates plc – where by chance Joan MacNaughton, then a senior civil servant, became a director shortly before she chaired the Whitehall appointments panel which recommended Lady Judge for the UKAEA post.

On 25 March this year, showing the legendary business acumen that has won her so many jobs, Judge bought 25,000 shares in Quintain at £4.55 and 2,000 more at £4.66, for a total cost of just over £123,000. Last week the share price plummeted to £1.615, meaning that her shares are now worth just over £43,000 – a loss of £80,000 in three months!

Barbara has joined the board of three more companies recently – Massey in the US, Magna in Canada and Bekaert in Belgium. No doubt they will all be hoping that Barbara doesn't buy their shares, lest they too fall victim to the Curse of Judge.

■ ANDREW OAKLEY, aged 47, of Narcissus Walk, Worsley, was found guilty of stealing a box of hair loss treatment from Boots and was given a six month community order.

Salford Advertiser

Street Of Shame

GORDON BROWN's great mate Sir Ronnie Cohen, the venture-capital tycoon, is building a 50ft swimming pool and a private cinema beneath the three adjoining houses he owns in Kensington – and, as the *Evening Standard* reported on 20 June, the constant noise and dust-clouds from the massive excavation are driving his neighbours mad.

Furthermore, the *Standard* noted, he has "managed to antagonise the entire neighbourhood" by secretly trying to buy part of the communal gardens for his private use.

Four days later, the *Daily Telegraph* gave a strikingly more sympathetic account. Sir Ronnie, it claimed, has "done everything possible to alleviate any inconvenience". While admitting that the patience of some residents was wearing thin, it added: "Several of Sir Ronnie's neighbours were stoical about the disruption, with one saying: 'When you live in London, what do you expect? Of course people want their houses to look good'."

The identity of these stoical characters is something of a mystery: the *Standard* couldn't find a single immediate neighbour with a good word to say for Cohen. The *Telegraph* also failed to mention the outrage prompted by his attempt to buy the communal garden. Which is just as well: for Sir Ronnie Cohen is a good friend of the paper's weirdo proprietors, Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay.

The twins often threaten legal action if anyone suggests that they interfere in editorial policy. But of course they don't *need* to interfere. *Telegraph* executives know who the Barclays' chums and associates are, and they're quite capable of doing the right thing without any prompting.

ENSCONCED in their faux castle retreat on the Channel Island of Brecqhou, the litigious brothers meanwhile have been ruffling feathers again on neighbouring Sark by taking its residents to court. This time they are suing the trustees of the island's community hall.

The billionaires are demanding back the £200,000 (plus costs and interest) they donated five years ago towards the completion of Sark's new school and community centre. They have taken exception to the fact that the hall and sports and recreation complex houses a cafeteria and bar.

A summons issued in Guernsey says the brothers want the commercial activities stopped because they do not fit with the hall's charitable status, which was to provide "facilities for education, training, instruction, culture, recreation, sport and leisure for the benefit of the inhabitants of Sark". They say the bar is too close to the school, they were never told it was to be included in the complex and they would not have supported the project had they known.

Suggestions that the café and bar provide competition for Sark enterprises owned by the Barclays are, of course, completely erroneous and wide of the mark.

THE ZZZ-LIST

Utterly pathetic non-stories about celebrities from the national press. Readers' contributions welcome.

"Lily Allen was spotted arm-in-arm with her ex Ed Simmons in London yesterday afternoon. Ed looked as though he made some purchases, but Lily left empty-handed and kept the same outfit on for her gig at Hyde Park later that day."

– Bizarre, Sun

WHAT is the secret of the *Telegraph*'s online success, which has propelled it to the top of the pops in Fleet Street in terms of the number of "hits"?

First, news hacks are now sent a memo three or four times a day from the website boffins listing the top subjects being searched in the last few hours on Google. They are then expected to write stories accordingly and/or get as many of those key words into the first par of their story. Hence, if the top stories being Googled are "Britney Spears" and "breast cancer" – hey presto, the hack is duly expected to file a piece about young women "such as Britney Spears" being at risk from breast cancer.

The second new development is to run as many downmarket and sensationalist stories as possible – to the horror of old *Telegraph* hands (or at least the few who are left) and readers. Since the young guns manning the website neither know nor care what the *Telegraph* stands for, they bung in whatever grabs their *Heat*-reading fancy.

Thus a story appeared the other day about the woman with the world's largest breasts – plus picture – and a man with a rare disease who was "turning into a tree", again with pics. After complaints from female members of staff, the megaboobs item was eventually taken down – but not before it had earned plenty more "hits" from salivating web-surfers whose tastes are clearly rather different from those of Sir Herbert Gussett.

THIRSTY *Telegraph* supremo Will Lewis isn't keeping up with popular culture quite as well as his online underlings, however. Despite his best efforts, Lewis can't disguise the fact that he's really a financial hack who'd rather read share prices than Katie Price novels.

At editorial conference a couple of weeks ago Lewis declared that the paper should go big on *Doctor Who*. "They've brought back Davos!" he raved – to a chorus of embarrassed coughs.

If Will wants to persuade colleagues that he's down with the kids, he could start by learning to distinguish between *Doctor Who* villains and the Swiss resort which hosts the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum.

Fortunately for Lewis, he will soon be more celeb-savvy so long as he reads his own paper. In an astonishingly feeble *Hellograph* report from Sir Elton John's summer party, "fashion director" Hilary Alexander gushed in the *Telegraph*'s news pages that "nothing could dampen the spirits of the 630 partygoers at £3,000 a head for the 10th annual White Tie & Tiara Ball, nor dull the sparkle of the amazing jewels which glittered in the cavalcade of bronzed cleavage, shimmering in the candle-lit setting".

What can have inspired such sugary coverage in the once sober news pages of the *Torygraph*? Can it have anything to do with the friendship Sir Elton's PR stooge, Gary Farrow, has developed with Lewis? The blokeish Farrow is married to *Sun* columnist Jane Moore, a close friend of *Sun* editor Rebekah Wade. Lewis is said to be keen to immerse himself in the News International nexus lest anything unfortunate happen to his position at the *Telegraph*.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The largest, best, and cheapest newspaper in the world" – *How the* Daily Telegraph *saw itself in 1855, from the masthead under editor Thornton Leigh-Hunt*

"Through our new integrated newsroom we are no longer just a morning player. We now provide quality content to our customers, when they want it, on a platform they want to receive it on. This has seen our customers become more engaged with a story as they follow it across these new platforms." – *How the* Daily Telegraph *sees itself in 2008, from the "Telegraph Media Solutions" website under editor Will Lewis*

"CAN you believe a thing you see on ITV?" the *Daily Mail* demanded recently, in another rant against "cons" and "fakery" in the media.

Culture minister James Purnell got a similar roasting from the *Mail* last year when his image was "dropped into" a publicity photo: "The cut-and-paste cabinet minister: So just how did New Labour's scourge of fakery in the media end up in this doctored photograph?"

All good questions. Now here's another. Can you spot the resemblance between these two photos of *Mail* hack Robert Hardman, used to illustrate his piece about beach polo last week? The first, ahem, image was captioned "Robert Hardman hits the beach", the second "Our man gets into the swing".

One more question. Did Fleet Street's scourge of fakery really expect to get away with running such a pathetically obvious fake?

"IF THE Portuguese police had a shred of decency they would now make a public apology to Kate and Gerry," Allison Pearson thundered in the *Daily Mail* last week as she recalled the appalling smear campaign to which the McCanns had been subjected by Inspector Knackeros.

"Remember the fluid from a dead body, matching Maddy's DNA, that was supposedly found in the boot of her parents' hire car? Remember the (false) rumour that Kate had previously suffered from depression? Remember the well-thumbed page of the Bible, with a text about a dead child, which was taken as evidence that Kate had a guilty conscience?"

Yup, Pearson's readers probably do remember headlines such as "DNA 'does prove Madeleine's body was in hire car'" (3/11/07), and reports suggesting that Kate McCann had "sleeping pills or medication for depression" which could have been accidentally taken by her daughter (14/9/07), and other stories wondering "Why did Kate McCann, who is Catholic, mark a passage in the Bible which talks about the death of a child?" (25/10/07) – not least because they all appeared in the *Daily Mail*.

HOW did the *Daily Mail*'s publishers manage to lose a laptop containing personal and bank details of "a large number" of current and former employees after months spent denouncing the government for "criminal carelessness" and "fathomless and inexhaustible incompetence" over similar cock-ups?

The laptop was, apparently, "stolen from an employee away from company premises" – just like the MoD laptop taken from a car in Birmingham in January. "You could not make it up," the paper stormed at the time. "Incredibly, the information was not encrypted."

And what of the data on the *Mail*'s laptop? "The PC was password-protected, but the data file itself was not," admitted a Simon Dyson, Associated Newspapers group finance director.

Managers even delayed more than a week before telling anyone they were at risk. By a pleasing coincidence, the *Mail* managed in the meantime to run yet another article castigating "the government's woefully inadequate care of sensitive data".

"THE Queen is so strapped for cash she planned to set up amazing premium-rate Dial-a-Royal phone lines to boost her coffers," chortled the *News of the World*'s front page recently.

"The crackpot idea was dreamed up by advisers... desperate to plug the £32m black hole in the budget after the government bluntly refused more cash to stop Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle falling down," revealed royal editor Robert Jobson. "Angry at having her pleas ignored by ministers, the Queen is now set for a showdown with Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Now that's a phone call we WOULD pay to hear."

Really? In that case, the *Eye* suggests Jobson gets in touch with Glen Mulcaire, the "private investigator" who assisted his predecessor, Clive Goodman, in bugging the phones of the royal household in order to nab exclusives for the *Screws*, a crime which earned him a six-month jail sentence last year. If it is quick, the paper could probably get Mulcaire for the same £2,019-a-week flat rate former editor Andy Coulson was paying him in 2005 and 2006 – despite, of course, at no time having any idea what he was up to.

THERE'S a new hazard for pedestrians in central London: being accosted by purple-clad distributors of the Dirty Digger's freesheet *thelondonpaper* who beseech them to buy a copy of the *Times*, rather like gully-gully men at Port Said.

This desperate ploy is provoking understandable anxiety at the Thunderer, especially as James Murdoch has warned publicly he will be making redundancies at News International. In a further boost to morale, TimesOnline has chosen this moment to launch its new "Redundancy Pay Calculator", an online tool allowing readers to calculate how much they are entitled to based on salary and years of experience.

Most useful, no doubt, for the 20 staff from the Wapping cuttings library who have just been given their marching orders.

SCOOP ahoy! The *Sunday Express* filled its first three pages last weekend with a thrilling "exclusive": its hack Matt Drake had located Mark Thatcher's "bolt-hole in Spain", a gated villa called Casa Flores perched on the hillside above San Pedro de Alcantara.

Not all that exclusive, perhaps. "It would be hard to find a better bolt-hole than the Casa Flores," Russell Miller noted in a long *Sunday Times* feature about Mark Thatcher, published on 8 June, "a luxury villa hidden in dense forest on a mountain above San Pedro de Alcantara, southern Spain."

Ah, but the *Sunday Express* had a new twist: Mark has fallen out with Stephen Humberstone, the old school chum from whom he rents the house. As the paper's huge headline put it: "'If you see Mark punch him for me.' What the owner of Thatcher's bolt-hole told the *Sunday Express*."

Sound familiar? Humberstone's falling-out with Thatcher was revealed a whole month earlier in Miller's piece, which ended with this quote from the aggrieved landlord: "If you see him, punch him on the nose for me, would you?"

MORE on the historic recent gig by Richard "Dirty" Desmond's RD Crusaders, modestly billed as "one of the best 'super groups' the world has ever seen".

The event took place at the London International Music Show, and according to one who was there, the backstage area was "a typically informal hive of muso backslapping and bonhomie" until the arrival of Dirty Des and his entourage of C-list celebs and security goons. All non-*OK!* types were then shooed away: Desmond's flunkeys even had the gall to interrupt one of the country's leading session drummers half-way through a masterclass, to protect the sensitive hearing of Peter Andre and Katie Price.

Alas! Despite a big advert in the *Sunday Express*, urging readers to book their seats ASAP as "tickets are limited", Dirty Des's supergroup was outsold five tickets to one by the gig next door, which featured a bunch of well-known drummers playing along to a group of session musicians – a fact curiously omitted from the *Daily Star*'s ecstatic three-column write-up of its proprietor's "achingly rock'n'roll" performance.

ROGER ALTON, who took up the editorship of the *Indie* last week, is a Renaissance man with many and varied enthusiasms: sex, sport, Hollywood actresses, gym work-outs, pink shirts, Kate Moss and *The Archers*. (One of his most cherished possessions is the signed *Archers* script he received as a leaving present from the *Observer*.) And he has wasted no time in showing *Indie* readers what they can now expect.

"Could sex save your life?" asked a front-page teaser on his first day in the chair, followed the next day by "Diva Alert: Secrets of Hollywood's Assistants" and "Muscle Up Like [Andy] Murray".

The day after that, the front page was dominated by a huge flannel-panel plugging a two-page news story on "Brangelina's Babies: The world awaits the $15 million twins". But Alton still found space for another of his fixations: "Awesome Archers: the soap with real edge."

No doubt readers will find this a refreshing change from all those shock-horror splashes about global warming. Can a feature by Kate Moss on why real men wear pink shirts be far behind?

ANDREW MARR is "distinctly troubled", according to a long interview in Monday's *Indie*. Not by his punishing schedule, or "his battle to protect his private life". No: what concerns him is nothing less than the future of reporting.

"The business of funding digging journalists is important to encourage," Marr explains. "It cannot be replaced by bloggers... Anyone can produce words but you need a system which pays journalists to find stuff out."

Hang on: what was that about battling to protect his private life? *Indie* readers seeking elucidation will seek in vain, as there's no further mention of it in the two-page spread. Yet it is germane to Marr's theme. What if hacks "find stuff out" but the courts then try to suppress it?

Earlier this year, as we reported in the last *Eye*, Marr obtained a high court injunction, not merely to stop the publication of "private" information about him but also to prevent the media from even reporting that he'd won a gagging order. Marr's lawyers wrote to the *Eye* (and other newspapers) warning that we mustn't mention the existence of the injunction. Any allusion to it – in an article about the development of "judge-made" privacy law, for instance – would be in contempt of court. Why didn't the *Indie* ask Marr about this?

Sgt Bridger added: "There are thousands of kids in New Addington, but only half cause problems, the majority don't cause any trouble."

Croydon Advertiser

Then and Now

Fallen soldier **"Fallen soldier"**

WHEN Dave Hartnett, acting chairman of Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs, suggested to Treasury minister Jane Kennedy that his department could "turn a blind eye" to non-domiciled taxpayers opting for a flat £30,000 fee to avoid awkward questions on their foreign income even where the rules didn't really allow them to (see last *Eye*), several junior but more principled officials pointed out that, er, HMRC can't just break the tax law.

A seemlier way of appeasing the wealthy tax dodgers had to be found, and it quickly was. In a last-minute amendment to the finance bill before it went through its Commons committee stage late last month, the rules were amended to make the move lawful. As opposition members failed to understand the significance of the change, never mind object, for a modest payment any non-dom can now ensure that HMRC doesn't pry into his or her (possibly undeclared) offshore stash.

Kennedy was unabashed following the grubbiest of many climb-downs to the non-dom lobby. "The current arrangements for the taxation of non-domiciled people in the UK," she boasted, "are very generous." She even dismissed the Lib Dem policy that non-doms should pay tax like everybody else after they have lived here for seven years (itself pretty generous) as "pay up or pack up". The idea of asking wealthy long-term residents to pay their fair share was clearly preposterous.

In a fight with Tory MPs over the honour of being the rich tax dodger's best friend, the minister gleefully claimed the endorsement of natural Labour supporter, er... Barclays Wealth. The private bank had, according to Kennedy, found that "the UK remains the most attractive place in the world for non-domiciles". All is well in tax haven Britain!

LABOUR's most recent pro-nuclear gesture came when energy minister Malcolm Wicks appointed Samir Brikho, chief executive of British construction giant Amec, to chair the government's "UK Energy Excellence Group".

This new strategy board is supposed to encourage investment in Britain's energy industry, including nuclear. And Brikho clearly believes in an atomic future for Britain: his company is abandoning all construction outside energy. Nuclear, wind and fossil fuels will now drive Amec's business.

Amec has worked hard to get in with the Labour leadership, hiring two former ministers in Brian Wilson and Richard Caborn. But what explains Labour's reciprocal enthusiasm?

Partly it is because Amec is one of the few British firms big enough to compete with foreign multinationals when the government finally goes ahead with the next generation of atomic power stations. But ministers also hope that appointing businessmen to their strategy boards will buy them a little loyalty from the corporate elite.

Alas, this hope seems forlorn. While Brikho is happy to sit on Labour boards, he has been seen at David Cameron's glamorous Conservative receptions too. It may be that as a Swedish-Lebanese businessman he thinks the Tories offer a better deal for non-doms. Or it may just be that the big money already thinks Cameron has won.

blah blah blah blahdy

I SPENT all last week in our area and on the Monday evening called in see a Yeovil youth project called Slum Survivor, which was organised by the Elim Pentecostal Church in Yeovil.

David's*Diary*
Yeovil MP
David Laws
writes his weekly column for the
Yeovil*Times*

CALLED TO ORDURE

Trough at the top

WHEN deciding their pay and allowances, MPs voted by the barrowload. But not many of them had the balls to speak in the debates beforehand. The pro-pay rise, pro-allowances brigade didn't want constituents to see them grubbily demanding more loot. MPs who felt queasy about the whole greasy fandango, meanwhile, didn't want to upset their fellow parliamentarians.

A much-reported incident in the lobbies, when Gordon Brown's thuggish aide Ian Austin swore at shadow chancellor George Osborne ("f*** off, toff") for wanting to rein in allowances, showed how fraught things were.

Lib Dem Simon Hughes (N Southwark & Bermondsey) was almost shouted down after he dared suggest it was "absolutely disgraceful" some outer-London MPs were claiming full whack for second homes even though they live just 20 minutes away from Westminster. Hughes suggested MPs should submit their expenses to the same sort of checks as other public servants. For this he was told he was "sanctimonious" and "hair-shirted" by former defence minister Don Touhig (Lab, Islwyn).

The shop stewards for the pocket-filling tendency were Touhig, David Maclean (Con, Penrith & the Border) and the appalling John Spellar (Lab, Warley), who is Speaker Michael Martin's best friend. Maclean clearly has a high opinion of MPs, saying that in his 25-year Commons career he had often taken "pay freezes, pay standstills, pay cuts and pay deferments – and a fat lot of good it did us".

Maybe so. But might it not also have been just and proper? Maclean sneeringly suggested that unless MPs' remuneration improved he might have to quit and take a job as a district planning officer, that being a better-paid job than MP.

No one in the debate touched on the amazingly generous pension scheme for MPs, or the juicy directorships and lobbying jobs they can walk into. The free parking in London, the subsidised canteens, the foreign jollies, the numerous other attendant privileges of being an MP: of these we heard not a whisper.

Touhig went into a sentimental description of his background – son of a miner and a home help, he was "a working-class boy from the mining valleys of South Wales". He was arguing that politics should never become a rich man's privilege. But no one ever suggested MPs should be paid nothing; the controversy was over transparency of expenses claims. Surely a working-class boy would have no more to fear from this than a "f***ing toff"?

Sir Patrick Cormack (Con, S Staffs), calling for more shekels, patted his stomach and said: "I believe that we ought to have some pride in ourselves." He was put out that "there are people in the catering department who earn more than MPs" – the way he said "catering department" was worthy of Margo Leadbetter in *The Good Life*.

Nick Harvey (Lib Dem, N Devon) was the poor soul who had proposed outside checks on MPs' allowances. He sought a conciliatory note: "If members are doing anything at all irregular they are more likely to be doing it through inadvertence than malfeasance," he said. Sure thing, Nick!

David Clelland (Lab, Tyne Bridge) was one of several old lags who claimed to be worried about how much outside auditors would cost. Harvey gently hoped that such checks might "save and improve the reputation of the House". This met with blank stares of incomprehension. Some of them really still don't comprehend how low their public esteem is, you know.

Michael J Foster (Lab, Hastings & Rye) floated the idea of different tax rates for MPs. The enormously fat Jimmy Hood (Lab, Lanark & Hamilton E) said it was "outrageous" he had been forced recently to go on a fact-finding trip to Nato and "lay out his own money" before being reimbursed. Er, isn't this standard practice in almost every other walk of life? Mike Gapes (Lab, Ilford S) was worried about MPs having to produce receipts. He painted some scenario about an MP having a locksmith round to install new locks. Couldn't identifying that locksmith help thieves gain access to an MP's house? Moos of agreement all round.

Peter Bottomley (Con, Worthing W) had a good suggestion, though. Candidates at general elections should state, on the ballot paper, what level of pay they would be willing to accept for doing the job. The public could then choose. This, needless to say, was met by astonished, horrified ejaculations from the trough-snouters of the Commons.

'Gavel Basher'

RARE WELSH BITS

NO ONE can doubt the dedication to public service of Alison Teague, a civil servant in Wales.

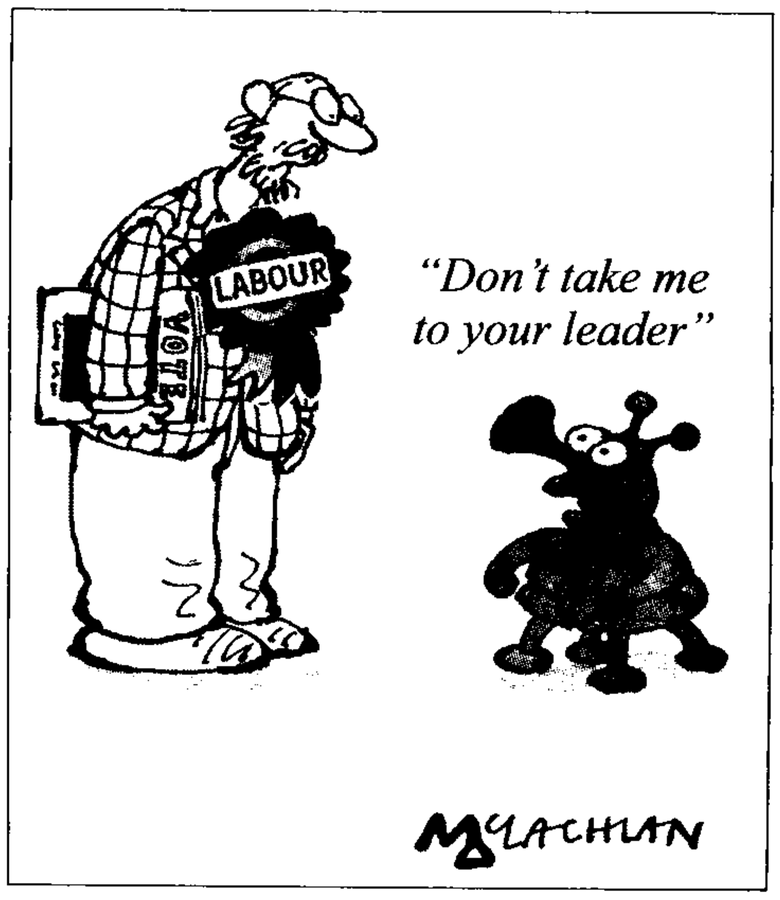
Ms Teague left her job at Arriva Trains Wales as head of "stakeholder management" (the chief stakeholder being the Welsh assembly, which dishes out ATW's subsidy), to become the assembly government's monitor who checks whether ATW complies with requirements.

Although she lives with ATW managing director Tim Bell, the assembly government isn't worried about a conflict of interest: presumably it admires her ability to monitor every detail of Bell's performance.

IT IS 15 years since the Welsh nationalist arsonists of "Meibion Glyndwr" burned any holiday cottages in the principality, but sensitivities remain – especially when the second-homeowner is a certain Charles Windsor.

Last year *Eye* 1190 reported how locals were peeved after Charles got permission for a holiday cottage on his estate at Llwynywormwood while they are barred from building new homes in the Carmarthenshire countryside, unless for agricultural or forestry workers.

Perhaps that's why fire appliances across mid-Wales were scrambled by an emergency call to Llwynywormwood last month, just before Charles and Camilla spent their first night there. Firefighters responded in double-quick time, but on arrival found the "shout" was only an exercise. Everything went well – except for the large dent left in Charles's security Range-Rover by the tender from Llandovery.



MAN IN THE EYE

ALAN DUNCAN

THE funding of Tory shadow energy minister Alan Duncan's office has caused some headaches for party leader David Cameron.

Duncan and his office received tens of thousands of pounds linked to international oil firm Vitol, which did not appear in the register of MPs' interests. Vitol boss Ian Taylor gave the Tories £160,000, much of which went into Duncan's office. But because the money came through the party rather than directly to the shadow minister, it was originally registered as a Conservative donation, not a Duncan payment.

Duncan, a former Vitol consultant who knows Taylor well, says he was unaware his office cash came from Taylor. In April, Duncan also became a director of Arawak, an oil firm part-owned by Vitol. His office told the Commons registrar about this job, but the message failed to get through. After a flurry of press reports, both the Ian Taylor and Vitol money now appear in an amended register. The registrar is happy that Duncan's declarations are in order and he has followed the rules, so end of story.

Or is it? The biggest question isn't about what donations were recorded on which forms, it is why Duncan should still want to be associated with Vitol given its record.

In 2001 the *Observer* established that the firm had paid Serbian warlord Arkan to help with an oil dispute in Serbia in 1995. And last year it confessed to "grand larceny" and was fined $17m for paying $13m in illegal "surcharges" to Saddam Hussein's government to help facilitate oil deals.

Last year it was also in court over deals it did in the Republic of Congo, aka Congo-Brazzaville, where it was accused of bribery and corruption linked to the purchase of 950,000 barrels of oil. Vitol and a finance house called Kensington became locked in a dispute over who should profit from the African nation. Kensington, having bought Congolese debt, expected to be repaid from oil sales and accused Vitol of helping the republic sell oil through a secret route to avoid its debt repayments.

Vitol bought its oil from a firm called Sphynx which was based in Bermuda. However, Sphynx was controlled by Denis Gokwana, head of the Congolese State Oil Company and an adviser to the Congolese president. The president's son was also involved in the sale. Sphynx was getting its oil from the Congo cheaply before selling it to Vitol.

Last November the judge in the case said Vitol had been told to disclose information about bribes apparently paid in Hong Kong to employees or representatives of the Congo. Instead of denying the bribery accusation outright, Vitol tried to "claim privilege against self-incrimination in relation to the disclosure of the information".

Before the case was settled out of court, the British judges thought the evidence against Vitol formidable. They said: "In various proceedings judges of the Commercial Court have found that the Congo has been taking elaborate steps to conceal its oil trading activities in order to prevent Kensington from identifying any resulting assets that might be seized in execution. They have also found that it is strongly arguable that Vitol SA and companies within the Vitol group have co-operated with the Congo in order to assist it."

Other judges pointed to the use of front companies to disguise the true identity of those doing the oil deals.

Alan Duncan's office told *Private Eye* that as he has never received money from Vitol it was not his responsibility to answer questions about the firm's behaviour. It seems that cash from Vitol's president doesn't count. Vitol declined to comment on the Kensington case.

Down on the Farm

AMONG those celebrating when Gordon Brown recently announced his "£100bn green energy" package, including plans to build 3,000 more wind turbines across Britain's countryside, were hundreds of farmers whose eyes lit up at the thought of sharing in the bonanza.

The wind companies have already been besieging landowners whose property might provide suitable sites for these lucrative monsters. The fact that the government is now taking new powers to railroad them through the planning process regardless of local objections only makes the prospect more alluring.

Just how attractive a proposition leasing out land can be to a cash-strapped farmer can be seen from a letter recently sent out to farmers by Scottish Power Renewables, promising them "the chance to make millions". For each two megawatt turbine the company will pay £10,500 a year for 25 years, so the reward for allowing a 10-turbine wind farm on your land could work out at £2.6m – all for no work other than putting your signature on the contract.

Elsewhere landowners have been offered as much as £17,000 a year for having just one turbine on their premises, equating to an income over 25 years of £425,000. What the wind merchants are careful *not* to tell the farmers, however, is how much they themselves can hope to earn from these turbines.

Although a two megawatt turbine, up to 350ft high, generates on average only a quarter of its capacity – due to the variability of the wind – thanks to the government's subsidy system this will earn its owner some £450,000 a year. At current prices, £230,000 will come from selling the electricity to the grid. But the developer also receives a further £218,000 from the government's "renewables obligation", which compels our electricity suppliers to buy all the power generated from wind, paying that much on top of its normal price, which is then passed on to the rest of us when we pay our electricity bills.

This is the secret which the wind companies are anxious not to reveal to the farmers whose land their machines stand on. It means that for each turbine, the developer will be making considerably more money each year than the landowner can hope to make in a quarter of a century. By the time a farmer who has a two megawatt turbine in his fields has made his £425,000, the wind company will have been able to put £11m in the bank – in return for an initial outlay of some £2m, plus yearly maintenance costs, all of course tax deductible.

And the benefit for the taxpayer who is funding all this? Last year the 2,000 wind turbines already built in Britain generated between them less electricity than a single gas-fired power plant, and much less than a nuclear power station. Even the 7,000 additional turbines Brown boasts of building (including those offshore) will produce less electricity than the Drax coal-fired power station in Yorkshire.

For any wide-eyed farmer who thinks of cashing in on the wind bonanza, meanwhile, another factor to bear in mind is that he is not likely to win the affection of many of his neighbours. When a windfarm scheme in Norfolk last year tore the local community apart, one unfortunate farmer involved became so depressed by the bitterness it aroused he was found dead in a ditch. It's a heavy price to pay for helping to save the planet.

'Muckspreader'

LONDON CALLING

LAST WEEK London's new Tory mayor Boris Johnson said it was "marvellous" for Londoners that Transport for London had finally bought out the 99-year Tramtrack PFI concession in Croydon (*Eye* 1208).

"It puts an end to the unbelievable scenario of millions of pounds of their taxes being used to pay Tramtrack to keep fares down," he said.

In fact the "unbelievable" PFI concession was devised by John Major's Tory government and the "marvellous" decision to scrap it was taken by Labour's Ken Livingstone.

A LEAKED report on working practices among drivers on the Piccadilly Line of the London Underground makes unnerving reading for travellers.

The unpublished report for the trains functional council, a joint management-union body, was prepared by two senior officials of the RMT and Aslef unions. It says "serious safety questions" are raised by the fact that the records of shifts worked by 281 drivers working out of Bollo House, a major Tube depot at Acton Town, are in many cases works of fiction.

Shift records were not "properly recorded", often being "manipulated". Some "employees are receiving overtime payments for spurious reasons" while others "are working six days a week and are failing to record what they are doing".

The doctored records, as well as enabling pay and time-off fiddles, make it impossible to establish if drivers are taking proper rest periods before transporting thousands of commuters. Tube drivers are not allowed to drive trains for stretches longer than 4 hours and 15 minutes at a time. The report suggests this rule may regularly be flouted.

A spokesperson for Transport for London told the *Eye* the report made "a number of recommendations... these included a programme of audits to ensure compliance across the system". TfL would not confirm whether the top recommendation – that one "syndicate leader" [lead driver] responsible for many of the irregular rotas be removed from a position of responsibility – was ever taken up. Sources at the depot say no, so the drivers will no doubt continue to take the piss. Mind the doors!

BORIS ON GAY MARCH

THE company featured on Page 12 of Tuesday's The Business was called Shopfitting Solutions, not Shoplifting Solutions, which appeared in some editions. We apologise for any embarrassment caused.

Leicester Mercury

EYE TV

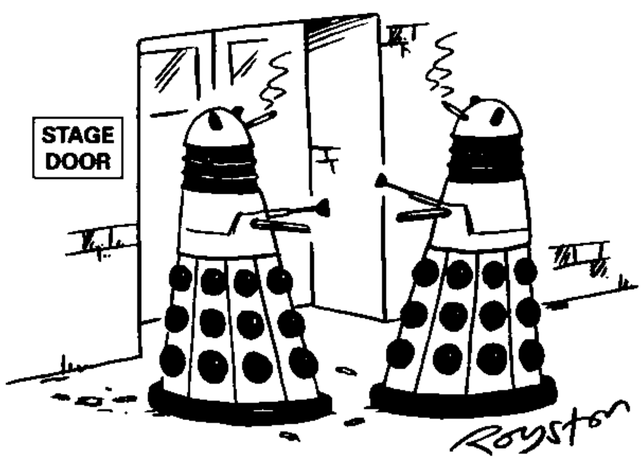
Personal Services Required (Channel 4)

ATTEND any telly festival at the moment and you'll hear speeches arguing that reality TV has reached its peak and that new genres need to be invented. Back in the schedules, though, everyone's still desperately copying the hits of three years ago.

At least **Personal Services Required** has some curiosity value as a rare example of commercial television copying a BBC reality format, rather than the other way round. Channel 4's clear, reeking envy of *The Apprentice* has led it to commission this shameless, brainless imitation in which two business people separately audition the same three wannabes for a job.

The first obvious drawback the series has is that, while Siralan is not remotely the global super-tycoon that the voiceovers for *The Apprentice* like to pretend, he is at least recognisable to the readership of the *Financial Times*. *Personal Services Required* is forced to go in with unknowns: Suzi, who runs a PR company in Hertfordshire, and Peter, who presides over some entertainment franchises in Cheshire.

However, conscious of the programme she's being employed to copycat, Suzi tries to raise the stakes by name-dropping all the business celebs she's ever met: Simon Cowell, Richard Branson and Max Clifford are all hurled into the mix within five minutes. She even gets a couple of minutes' face time with Max in an attempt to give the peak-time audience what it's assumed to need. But she needn't have bothered,



because it's soon obvious that the programme has realised it hasn't got a Sugar equivalent and has cut its losses so that the trick here will be that the bosses behave just like the apprentices.

Both Suzi and Peter, it becomes clear, are batty and batey. Within minutes of meeting the first two contenders, Suzi has started furious rows with them. At the same speed, Peter solves another technical problem with the format: because the contestants do their "tasks" one at a time and don't live together in a large house, there's almost no possibility of sex taking place, a grievous weakness in reality TV. Peter gamely steps up to the plate by talking continually about sex and coming on to the two female apprentices as soon as he meets them. He also smartly informs them that one of their tasks will be to "manage" his love life, which, he claims, involves the juggling of six girlfriends.

Surprisingly, perhaps, for a bloke with such a sextet, Peter is very sexually insecure. As soon as the one male applicant arrives, he jabbers: "Are you sure you are able to be a male PA to a camp-sounding heterosexual boss?" There are hints of quite an interesting story in that character but the show ignores them because it doesn't fit the model being ripped off.

As Suzi and Peter don't have boardrooms, the three contenders are summoned to their dining rooms, where the bosses make a dramatic entrance to announce who has got the job. Then, though, a caption racing across the screen renders everything pointless and suspicious by suggesting that one candidate wasn't playing for real but only wanted to be on telly for a bit. Like everything else in this sloppy copy, it's what we should have expected.

'Remote Controller'

DUMB BRITAIN

LBC 97.3

Nick Ferrari: Paris is bigger than Vienna. And Vienna is bigger than Rome. Which is the smallest?

First caller: Vienna.

Second caller: Ooh, I dunno. Paris?

The Weakest Link

Anne Robinson: The Cairngorms are home to Britain's last free-ranging herds of which animals, popularly associated with Christmas?

Contestant: I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?

AR: The Cairngorms are home to Britain's last free-ranging herds of which animals, popularly associated with Christmas?

Contestant *(pause)*: Turkeys?

O·B·N

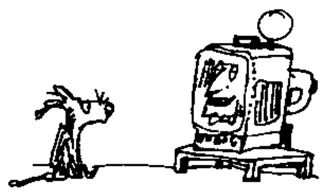
"His manliness, undoubtedly, makes him a hugely charismatic presence. But there is something else, something I can only describe as 'otherness' about Marco: a part of himself always out of his real-life self, looking in, watching, guiding, talking quietly amid the chaos, holding his hand; an almost ethereal, external silence."

JACI STEPHEN on Marco Pierre White, *Daily Mail's Weekend Magazine*

Submitted by Jemma Walton.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

MEDIA NEWS



IN THE last *Eye* we suggested that the Waorani tribe of Ecuador, subjects of one of the episodes of BBC2's *Tribal Wives*, had been featured on TV so often "it would be no surprise if the elders had DVD adverts painted on their foreheads in woad".

While this turned out to be not quite the case, since the programme was broadcast the *Eye* has been provided with some interesting information about Penti, the tribal leader who featured alongside his wife and seven children – namely, his email address, which outsiders have long been invited to use "to find out how you can help or to express interest in visiting the Waorani".

And what of the Kuna, another tribe which featured in the series that promises to transport participants to "some of the most remote places on earth" to experience life alongside the locals "in a way that has never been explored before"? They recommend booking flights and hotels in their homeland, the Archipelago de San Blas, as far ahead as possible, though the *Lonely Planet* guide to Panama, which features an entire chapter devoted to the commercially astute tribe, points out that "most hotels offer complete packages, where a fixed price gets you a room, three meals a day and boat rides to neighbouring islands for swimming, snorkelling and lunching on the beach".

Since the 60s, Air Panama has been offering a daily flight to the area, stopping at six of the inhabited islands, while rival operator Aeroperlas runs three a day. There is a tourist visitation fee of $3-$5 per island, and it is best to stock up on cash as there are no cash machines in the area (although coin-operated telephones for domestic and international calls are apparently plentiful).

BBC News Online's mobile service offers a typical summary of "the news that matters" to BBC hacks. And very revealing it was too at the end of last month.

A story headlined "Mugabe Claims Sweeping Victory" ran across seven pages, while the "NHS at 60" claimed six and reports that another soldier had been killed in Afghanistan managed just two.

But the big "splash" of the day, with ten times the space devoted to "Soldier Dies in Afghanistan", was: "Amy Winehouse Lashes Out At Fan" spread across... 20 pages. A "Reporter's Blog" was added, providing "regular updates" from Glastonbury for the terminally news hungry. "Sunday 29th. Time 0100 local time (0000 GMT) The reception Jay-Z received makes the pre-show controversy about whether a rap star should headline the festival look faintly quaint and ridiculous," it revealed, having wasted a further seven pages on this important topic.

ACCORDING to the BBC's propaganda rag *Ariel*, director-general Mark Thompson "considers most of the BBC is travelling with him", following the latest staff survey.

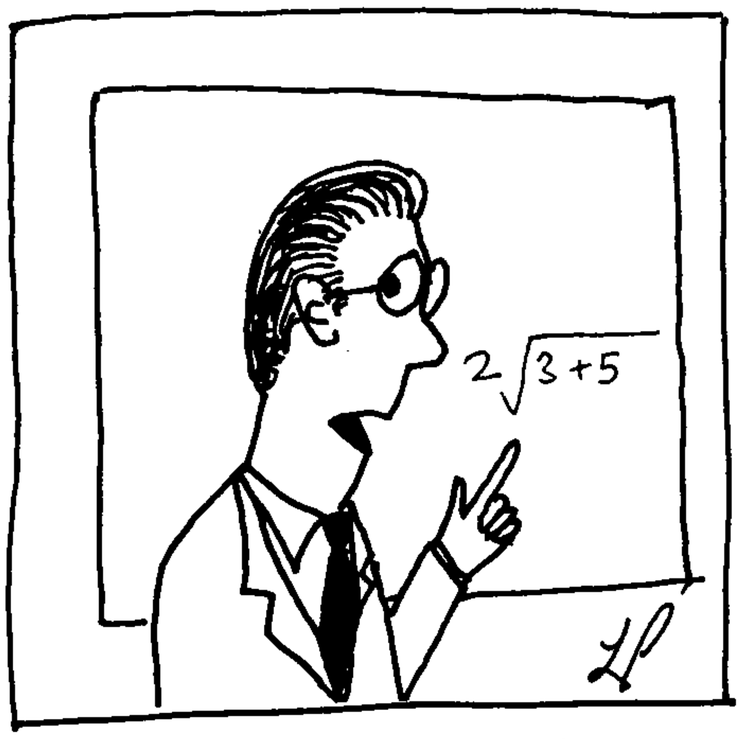
Not so BBC News. Here the survey found that "the BBC is not convincing staff that it is moving in the right direction" and that "managers within News are not viewed as particularly supportive".

Thompson comments: "You can see in this survey evidence that the people who work here love the BBC." Er, can you really?

NUMBER CRUNCHING

305 Number of Team Great Britain competitors going to China for Olympics

437 Number of BBC staff going to China for Olympics



"Oi! You looking at my surd?"

IT DOESN'T take much for the BBC to rouse the anger of the *Daily Mail*, and the news that the corporation was planning to introduce a local video broadband service for 60 regions of the UK certainly did the trick.

"Haven't the corporation's empire-builders done quite enough damage to Britain's independent radio sector," a *Mail* editorial demanded, "without wrecking our hard-pressed local and provincial newspapers, which provide such diversity and give much-needed stimulation to local democracy?"

It modestly omitted to mention one further consequence: since the Daily Mail and General Trust owns Northcliffe, the country's fourth-largest regional newspaper group, anything which wrecks the local and provincial press would also be bad news for the *Daily Mail*.

"THE BBC admitted last night that it was wrong to show footage of a Palestinian man being shot dead after running amok with a bulldozer in Jerusalem," stormed the *Daily Mail* on 4 July.

"More than 150 viewers protested after the clip was broadcast on the *Ten O'Clock News*," it said.

Meanwhile on the *Daily Mail*'s website: "Pictured: The moment officers 'liquidated' Palestinian in bulldozer terror attack on a busy Jerusalem street."

A FREEDOM of information request by *Private Eye* has revealed that the BBC hasn't a clue what branded props its programmes are using or how – a clear breach of its rules and one that leaves it open to exploitation by product placement companies (see *Eyes passim*).

When asked about product placement, the BBC always claims it has an audit trail that ensures it uses a variety of props. According to a spokesperson, there is a "substantive record" and "you can track every product that's used in all the shows".

So where are the invoices? When the *Eye* asked how many the BBC had received from "preferred suppliers" (ie product placement firms) since new rules were introduced in 2005 requiring props to be bought via central management for at least £1, the answer was precisely, er, 13. "Invoices are just one element of a very complex system of procuring props," the spokesperson explained.

In fact the paper trails demanded by BBC bosses are apparently optional; and even where paperwork does exist, the corporation can't find it. So much for "tracking every product".

11.30 Chopped Off: the Man Who Lost His Penis
John Wayne Bobbitt's story. (S) 96265077
12.35am Desperate Virgins (S)

Radio Times

AD NAUSEAM

TWO YEARS ago the succinctly-named ad agency Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe/Y&R won several campaign-of-the-year awards for its "Your M&S" work, featuring Twiggy and a bevy of other beauties.

It seemed odd to some that a campaign consisting of a group of models modelling stuff was being deemed creative genius, but M&S's sales were soaring and the advertising industry was more than happy to take the credit. In response, M&S increased its adspend by 44 percent, while RKCR/Y&R took home the IPA Effectiveness Grand Prix award and M&S marketing director Steven Sharp was made the Marketing Society's marketer of the year. Adland loved the campaign most of all because it eschewed digital and the like, and instead concentrated on posters and TV spots – which happen to be where agencies make the most money.

Two years on and the visionary "Your M&S" campaign continues, with the same models doing much the same schtick, but in a remarkable about turn RKCR/Y&R's "idea" appears to have become completely ineffective. M&S's sales have fallen 5.3 percent in the past three months, with clothes hardest hit. All of a sudden, no one is talking about the incredible redeeming power of advertising. Could it be the campaign's merits or otherwise were entirely immaterial and RKCR/Y&R merely surfed on an economic crest? Someone should ask Twiggy.

"Clear your desk – and that'll be 5p for the plastic bag"

THIS column's most eagerly awaited ads of 2008 were due to break last weekend from British Airways and Virgin Atlantic. They were prompted, or rather enforced, by the ruling of a US federal court.

Readers will recall that in February a US judge decided that BA and Virgin had fixed fuel surcharges illegally, and that passengers on flights between certain dates had therefore been overcharged. BA and Virgin were ordered to refund those passengers £100m, but the court also told them to run, and pay for, an ad campaign to make sure customers knew they were entitled to the refunds.

The ads began on Saturday – or at least they were supposed to have done. As the *Eye* went to press on Monday, there was still no sign of them. Thus in the spirit of openness and honesty, we'd like to suggest that anyone who flew long haul with either airline between 11 August 2004 and 23 March 2006 should go to www.airpassengerrefund.com and make sure BA and Virgin don't get to keep money that's not rightfully theirs...

M&S SALES SLUMP

BIRTSPEAK 2.0

"GUARDIAN News & Media is pleased to announce the launch of Engagement, a new and exciting research study and media planning tool that enables the comparison of national newspapers according to levels of audience engagement. With results fused to TGI, and new functionality incorporated into existing industry planning software, users of Engagement can now evaluate titles not only on the quantity of exposures delivered but also on the quality of those exposures."

– *Guardian internal newsletter*

MUSICAL CHAIRS

JUST as with the Olympics, the headlong rush to grab a slice of the Paralympics action is providing a useful distraction from real problems.

The Royal National College for the Blind (RNCB) in Hereford, for example, made headlines last month when it was selected as a pre-Games training camp after launching an academy of blind football. At the same time, however, students were protesting outside the principal's office, demanding to know what academic courses will run at the college next term.

Following a visit from consultants last year, principal Christine Steadman embarked on a mysterious "restructuring" scheme, which bosses have refused to discuss with teachers and students.

What they do know is that there will be 12 staff redundancies, which appear to have gutted the highly successful music technology department, recently described by Ofsted as one of the best A-level music technology departments in the country. Staff understand that all piano-tuning courses will end and there will be severe cuts in sound engineering, both subjects that lead to far more careers than the blind football academy ever will.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

SIGNAL FAILURES

Branson fickle

RICHARD BRANSON has dumped his green crusade for railways as he throws his weight behind Labour's planned third runway at Heathrow.

In 2006 Virgin was so keen to undermine domestic airlines it offered free first-class train travel to anyone with a used Manchester-London boarding pass. And in June 2007 Branson was jubilant after the Advertising Standards Authority rejected easyJet's claim that Virgin Trains had misled the public in emphasising rail's lower carbon emissions.

"A Virgin train is clearly way ahead of short-haul commercial aircraft on carbon emissions," gushed Beardie. "More and more customers are giving up short-haul airline travel in favour of the train, citing the environment as one of the principal reasons for doing so. The ASA ruling can leave them in no doubt that they are right to do so."

What Beardie might have gone on to say was that for a relatively small investment in upgrading tracks, trains from Manchester and other cities could go direct to Heathrow. People who use short-haul air to reach long-haul airlines (eg Virgin Atlantic) at Heathrow, could then cut their carbon emissions by taking the train to the airport, as they'd no longer have to get to Paddington station for the expensive Heathrow Express train.

Just a year later, however, Branson has changed his mind about what customers are right to do. "More than a third of Heathrow's passengers are in transit, connecting from one airport to another via Heathrow," he wrote in the *Times*. "Some critics of BAA and Heathrow claim that an increase in such passengers is not in the national interest. They have missed the point. Transit passengers are one of the prime reasons why airlines fly to so many destinations from Heathrow."

He and BAA fear the prospect of Heathrow losing out to Paris, Amsterdam and Frankfurt, but he omitted to say that those airports have stations on inter-city rail networks. Lyon, France's second city, is less than two hours from Paris Charles de Gaulle airport by electric train although they're further apart than Newcastle and Heathrow (where the train journey usually takes more than four hours, even with a gold-plated Heathrow Express ticket). Electric trains to Frankfurt airport take under an hour from Cologne city centre and 75 minutes or less from Stuttgart city centre.

As Beardie said, electric trains are way ahead of aircraft on carbon emissions. They're also much less exposed to the global oil market; as oil prices climb, the hub airports in the strongest position are the ones many passengers can reach easily by rail rather than short-haul air. Somehow Beardie has lost sight of this logic in the last 12 months. Either that, or he sees the environment as a marketing device for his own narrow business interests. Surely not!

MANY thanks to reader Paul Tamblin, who while waiting at Oxford train station recently was struck by the remarkable similarity between the design on the side of First Great Western's coaches and an electrocardiogram showing a flatline.

As Mr Tamblin observes, the owner of a flat-lining heart has probably reached the end of the line, so to speak – something most delayed FGW passengers can only dream of achieving.

'Dr B. Ching'

ACADEMY SPECIAL

AS schools secretary Ed Balls threatens "failing schools" with closure and reincarnation as "academies" (even though 26 of the schools named and shamed are already academies), the push to create more of these unpopular, business-backed schools has gone into overdrive. Indeed, some proponents of academies are so determined to get their way, they have resorted to bullying and strong arm tactics.

●A primary school in **Camden, north London,** has been told it will have to wait five years for badly needed repairs unless it agrees to make room in its grounds for another school, which itself is being moved to make room for the borough's first academy.

The Frank Barnes school for deaf children is being evicted from its home in Swiss Cottage to make way for the new academy, but education bosses still haven't found anywhere to relocate it. Last month therefore the dilapidated Edith Neville Primary School was told it could have cash for its much-needed building work soon, if – and only if – it agrees to squeeze Frank Barnes on to its site. A council meeting heard that unless "co-location" went ahead, "it would put back the [*repairs*] funding by five years". Governors say over-crowding at the Edith Neville site would harm children from both schools.

●In **Bolton**, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) is planning court action to block the transformation of Hayward School into "Essa Academy", sponsored by several businesses, including the Cohen Chemist chain.

The council wrote to parents and teachers on 19 May telling them of the proposal to close the school and reopen it as an academy from 1 September. Comments had to be submitted within 13 days – hardly the six-week consultation required by law. The council has been treating the academy as a *fait accompli* for some time. Hayward was already due to get a £15m rebuild from the government's targeted capital fund, but back in February Bolton announced that, with Hayward being rebuilt as an academy, that money would be spent elsewhere.

●Protesters occupying the site of the proposed Ark Academy in **Wembley** expect eviction this month so that Brent council can start work on a temporary school building which is due to open in September.

Brent gave itself permission for the short term buildings even though there is a legal challenge to the planning permission for the whole Ark project from Wembley Park Action Group – consisting of teachers, residents, councillors and users of the sports ground that is to be built on. Businesses and sports teams, which had been promised another year's use of the fields, plus help to relocate, have been told to get out by 31 July.

Meanwhile Wembley Primary School has refused to keep classrooms free for the academy's younger pupils, in case the temporary buildings aren't ready by September when the new school is due to open. The school's chair of governors said there would be "no benefit of any sort" from squeezing in the Ark pupils.

●**Copeland** MP Jamie Reed, having brokered funding for Westlakes Academy from the nuclear industry (see *Eye* 1159), last month announced that he had secured £30m to turn Whitehaven School into an academy. But does anyone want it?

None of the options in Cumbria county council's North Copeland education plan include turning Whitehaven into an academy and staff are horrified at the idea. But the school was given a notice to improve by Ofsted last year, the poor showing following a difficult time for the school after the death of the head of maths. Head teacher Malcolm Smith said the inspection had put the school in a position where academy status might be proposed, which caused "uncertainty" for staff and students.

However, just days after Reed's announcement, Ofsted reported "many improvements" at the school, leaving Reed to wheedle that "there is no compulsion for the governors or the school to seize this opportunity, but I doubt it will come around again".

●And what progress at Pimlico School where parents were railroaded by **Westminster** council into converting from a comprehensive to an academy (see *Eye* 1212)? After a damning Ofsted report in December 2006, the failing school was put into "special measures" and run by an "executive committee" consisting of four members of Westminster's education department. Under the council rescue plan, the "preferred option" was (surprise, surprise) academy status, which is now happening. Alas, the school is still in chaos, student and staff morale is rock bottom and a new Ofsted report has shown… no improvement.

ECO-GNOMICS

Trouble in the townships

EVEN by this government's standards, the rapid meltdown of the much trumpeted "eco-towns" initiative has been impressive. Gordon Brown's environmental "flagship" is fast turning into a farce, as it emerges that little or no environmental due diligence has been done on any of the proposed sites for these "green" townships. In fact some of the shortlisted plans have a distinctly murky air to them.

Take the proposed Pennbury development in Stoughton, Leicestershire. It turns out the site is owned by the Co-operative Group, which has in the past had several planning applications to build on its land rejected on environmental grounds. Yet now Pennbury has appeared on the shortlist of the government's favourite candidates for development. How so?

As the *Torygraph* pointed out recently, 22 Labour MPs are sponsored by the Co-operative Party (and are members of it under a dual-membership scheme with Labour). They include Ed Balls, who is married to Yvette Cooper, who as housing minister announced the eco-towns project last year. Another is Phil Hope, minister for the East Midlands. Surely there is no link between the Co-operative Group's donations to Labour and the sudden decision to put previously rejected planning applications back on the shortlist?

It took a freedom of information request to find out that civil servants had rejected Pennbury on the basis it had "high-level constraints". It was only graded a "C/D" under a ratings system in which "A" meant there were no environmental or transport issues and "D" meant that problems were "insurmountable".

Meeting notes pointed out that Pennbury had "no decent public transport access", "looks like an urban extension" and was "hemmed in by housing". Not a prime candidate for an eco-town, then. Yet four months after this damning indictment, it was shortlisted.

Another twist in the tale is that the Co-operative's construction partner is our old friend ARUP, whose disastrous failure in managing the Dongtan "eco-city" project in Shanghai (see *Eye* 1211) must have been overlooked when the Pennbury plans were being drawn up. The company has such a cosy relationship with government that minor details like the failure to deliver anything in Shanghai can be conveniently brushed aside (especially when there is a lucrative Olympics to build.)

It remains to be seen whether campaigners will succeed in removing Pennbury from the final shortlist of eco-town sites later this year. But no wonder Hazel Blears' department for communities is busily searching for a PR agency to support the government's communications vision for eco-towns!

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

OUT OF TOON

HUNDREDS of disabled and special-needs children face a bleak future in Newcastle after the city council cut off funding for Saturday clubs and summer courses which provided stimulating activities for the children and much-needed respite for their families.

For the past seven years tens of thousands of pounds from the government's Children's Fund were made available annually to special-needs charities in the city which ran a number of successful schemes. Applications for funds were dealt with by an administrator from the Barnardo's charity. From April this year, however, the government funnelled Children's Fund money via councils.

In Newcastle, council officials vetted bids, rejecting all the applications from disabled children's charities, including the Edward Lloyd Trust and the Newcastle Toy and Leisure Library, which had previously run summer and weekend schemes. A shortlist was then put to a panel of children at a "U Decide" conference. Money will now be directed to council-run anti-bullying programmes, play schemes and after-school clubs – leaving special-needs charities severely short of funds and having to lay off staff. The council-run schemes are in theory open to all, but parents say they don't cater adequately for disabled children.

One mother told the *Eye*: "Both charities, well-run and independent organisations, were successful and did a very good job with often very challenging children. Now it looks as if we're going to lose all that support."

After we contacted the council, a spokesman said: "Other organisations met the criteria more fully for this particular funding. We think that these particular organisations do excellent work, and will work with them to explore alternative funding options."

● SO. FAREWELL then to brass-necked Tory councillor Neil Godwin, who has quit Cherwell district council in Oxfordshire after ignoring a blatant conflict of interest for a year (*Eye* 1207).

Godwin, farmer and ice cream parlour mogul, stands to gain up to £20m if the so-called Weston Otmoor "eco-town" is built. Many of the vast housing estate's 15,000 ticky-tacky boxes will be built on the 200 acres of farmland Godwin has optioned to developers Parkridge.

Godwin was councillor for the village of Weston-on-the-Green, which would be swamped by Weston Otmoor – aka "Wotmoor". He denied any conflict of interest, saying all the criticism had made him sick with "vertigo" – maybe from standing on that huge pile of money. It was only with publication of Parkridge's plans, showing the full horror of what's in store, that he finally jumped.

GOING APESHIT

THEY'VE already flogged many playing fields and swimming pools bequeathed by previous generations for the health and recreation of the public. Now councils are turning to the parks to make a quick buck.

Pollok country park, three miles from the centre of Glasgow, was gifted by the Maxwell family in 1969 to the city's people "for ever... [so] that the open spaces and woodlands should remain for the enhancement of the beauty of the neighbourhood". Thirty years previously the National Trust had been given a watching brief that any changes to the park and its trees would need its consent.

Last year Pollok won the "Britain's best park" award. Since 1983 it has been home to the Burrell Collection, the eclectic collection of medieval and renaissance art, tapestry, furniture, ceramics, painting and sculpture amassed by the late ship-owner/philanthropist Sir William Burrell. Nine thousand works are housed within an award-winning modern pavilion specially designed to integrate with the surrounding woodland.

Alas, fresh air, tranquillity and art are not enough for Glasgow city council. The view through the Burrell's plate glass windows will soon include an aerial assault course immediately outside. Earlier this year the council granted planning permission for "Go Ape", a "high-wire forest adventure course" consisting of zip wires running down pathways through the trees, surrounded by a two-metre fence. To break even the project will require thousands of visitors every year.

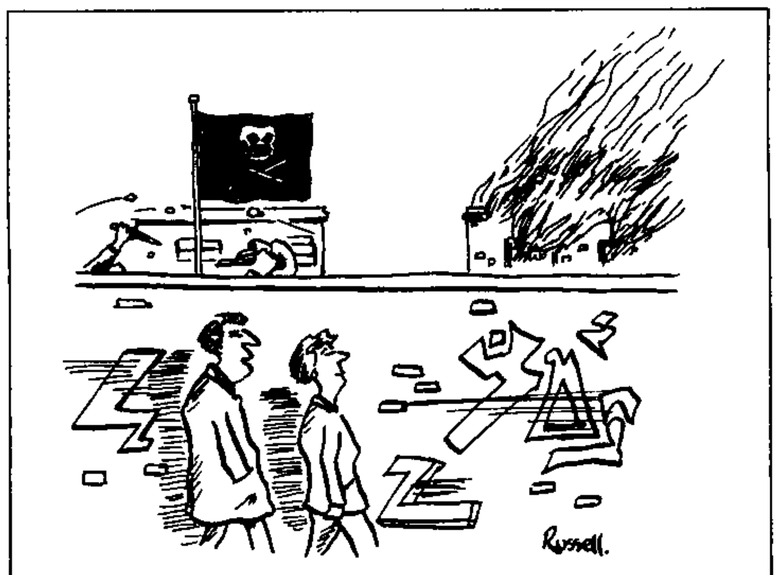
The National Trust wasn't asked for its opinion and the Maxwell family have expressed disappointment. Objectors say the consultation was flawed and that issues such as lavatories and parking were not properly considered. Although Go Ape will be open until 9pm, the loos at the Burrell close at 5pm. Anyone out for a quiet evening stroll in the forest may be advised to keep a watchful eye upwards.

● Is your park under threat? Write to strobes@private-eye.co.uk.

GARDENS, WHO NEEDS 'EM?

FLOGGING the family silver – sorry, a strategic rolling programme of asset capitalisation – has provided a lucrative source of income for the London borough of Richmond in recent years, under both Tory and Lib Dem regimes. Car parks, public toilets, lock-up garages and council offices have all been sold to the private sector, often for development and despite local protests.

Residents won one skirmish last year, when with the help of ward councillors they saw off an application by Care UK, the council's PFI "partner" for residential and nursing care services for older people. It had wanted to demolish Gifford House, a former old folks' home facing historic Twickenham Green, a conservation area, and build 27 flats in four storeys with 30 car parking spaces. But Care UK, which boasted of hugely increased profits after taking over old people's homes in Richmond, Islington and Hammersmith & Fulham while cutting staff wages (*Eye* 1168), is not so easily deterred.



"With both Flagship and Beacon, we're especially well served by schools in this area"

Gifford House shares a site with a former day nursery with a large garden. The nursery – not part of the PFI deal with Care UK – is to be replaced with a new "family contact and assessment centre" for the borough, the cost of which will be covered by the council's share of the Gifford House sale. The garden will be sacrificed to "increase the scope for a successful outcome".

So Care UK's interest now extends well beyond the former old people's home to gobble up as much land as possible. The family centre will be pushed into a corner, encroaching on ancient walls and listed buildings, and the rest of the site filled with as many flats as the applicants can get away with.

Locals remain in the dark about the details of the council's "surplus site disposal agreement" with Care UK, attempts to prise out some facts under freedom of information having failed. Issues of contaminated land are unresolved and there are no feasibility studies on the best provision for vulnerable families and children – residents can't even get confirmation of how many will use the service. All they know for certain is that there won't be a garden for them.

● NEWS from Northampton of some of the most childish behaviour ever witnessed in a council chamber. A meeting to sign off the borough's accounts had to be abandoned after two hours of squabbling about who was to sit where. Cllr Tony Clarke, a former Labour MP and councillor who fell out with his party last year, is now the sole independent on the Lib Dem-dominated borough council. He refused to vacate his seat so that his five former colleagues from Labour could sit together. None of them would sit in the empty seat next to him – indeed, they would not sit down at all. To even things up, the mayor ordered everyone else to stand up. This they did, except one Tory who refused to move *from* the seat Cllr Clarke was refusing to move *to*. The rest of the Tories then walked out.

EYE TOLD YOU SO

JANUARY 2006: Rotten Boroughs reports that claims by Skidrow-on-Sea council and developer Karis that actor Brad Pitt is involved in designing trendy architect Frank Gehry's "tin can towers" King Alfred flats complex in Hove are bogus (*Eye* 1150).

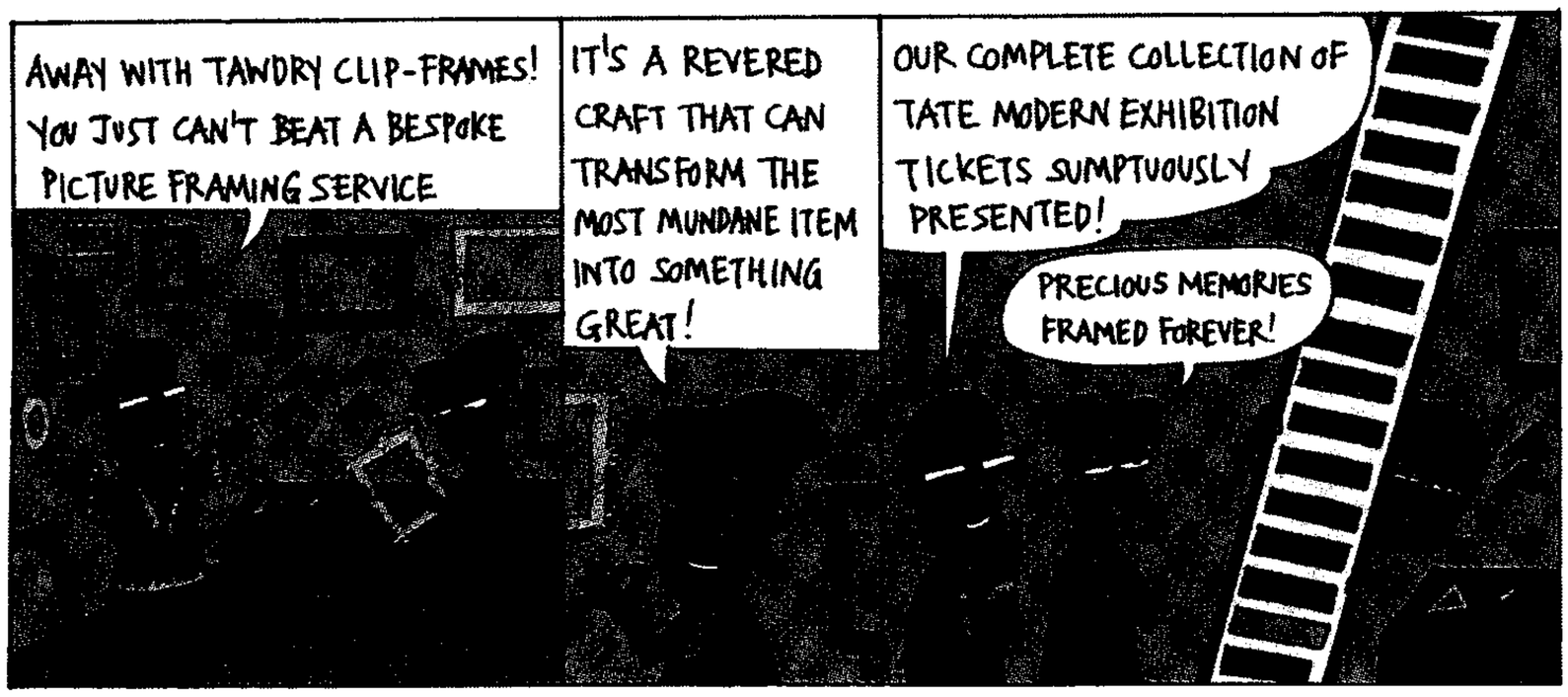
JULY 2007: Rotten Boroughs reveals that Karis's accounts are overdue and that the last ones filed show a £2m deficit (*Eye* 1189).

AUGUST 2007: Rotten Boroughs reveals that Karis boss Josh Arghiros paid drama students to demonstrate in favour of the King Alfred scheme at a vital planning meeting (*Eye* 1191).

FEBRUARY 2008: "Things are not looking too propitious" for "Gehry's monstrous scheme" (*Eye* 1203).

JULY 2008: Gehry's involvement has "come to nothing" reveals the *Guardian*, while the Brighton *Argus* reports Arghiros as admitting the financial viability of the scheme is "very shaky". Just fancy that!

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

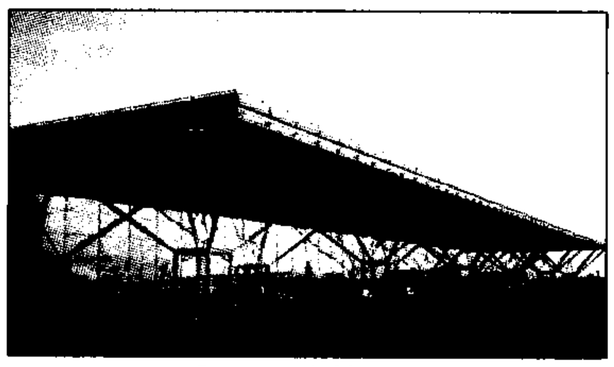


NOOKS and CORNERS

THIS column tends to concentrate on Britain's smaller architectural outrages, but let's not forget the bigger ones that can slip through on the nod. Airports, for example.

Not only is there a proposal to build an extra runway at Heathrow, but the British Airports Authority (BAA) also wants to enlarge Stansted by building a second runway, more than doubling it in size. The result would be a massive airport in once-rural Essex occupying more land than Heathrow does at present and requiring the demolition or removal of no fewer than 19 listed buildings and adversely affecting 51 others (including a medieval church).

The proposals envisage that Stansted could handle 90m passengers a year when it is currently limited to 25m. This is surely lunacy. In 1984, at the public inquiry into earlier proposals to build a second runway, the inspector, (Sir) Graham Eyre QC, concluded this would "constitute nothing less than a catastrophe in environmental terms". It will blight towns, villages and countryside for miles; and put some 12m tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year (at present Stansted exudes 5m tonnes).



Stansted Airport

It is to expedite such schemes – muting protest and bypassing local democracy - that the government wants to "streamline" the planning process with its planning reform bill, handing consideration of major public projects to an unelected independent commission deemed to be objective. It is considered to be a scandal that it took five years to get planning permission for Terminal Five at Heathrow, yet if longer had been taken, and more intelligent thought applied, the result might have been better – or perhaps found to be not necessary at all.

The Stansted plan – enthusiastically backed by the government but strongly opposed by the National Trust, Friends of the Earth, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and English Heritage – is based on a report issued by BAA in 2003. It is difficult to see why anything advocated by this now Spanish-owned, vested-interest monopoly should be taken seriously given the debâcle of Terminal Five. Besides, the world has changed. Not only is the rising cost of fuel undermining naïve estimates of ever-expanding air travel, but it is also beginning to dawn on even the posturing dim-wits in the government that the continuing expansion of air travel contributes to climate change.

A project like Stansted is defended as being in the "national interest", which really means the interest of commercial business in general and BAA and airlines in particular. Perhaps, in the not-so-long run, we are all doomed; but it is still hard to see why the government should promote a development which is out of date, will blight swathes of precious countryside and the lives of millions of citizens – and destroy a large number of fine buildings, listed or otherwise – all to benefit airlines that are contributing to global catastrophe by encouraging unnecessary cheap air travel (more than 85 percent of Stansted's passengers take Easyjet or Ryanair). The destructive plans for Stansted and Heathrow are based on forecasts for air travel that are increasingly unreal, as well as undesirable.

BACK to the small scale and the Yorkshire village of Cullingworth, near Haworth, where villagers are trying to stop demolition of Woodfield House, a decent Late Georgian stone farmhouse on the edge of the green belt.

Earlier this year it was bought by Gordon Halton, of Halton Homes, who in advance of applying for planning permission advertised "Woodfield Court", a development of eight houses to be built on the site and in the grounds. On 30 May, a digger arrived and a workman announced that the house was to be demolished next day.

An early morning assembly of villagers, council officials and the local MP prevented that, leaving Mr Halton claiming that the digger was there only to dig up the drive and demolish the greenhouse. Four days later, he started cutting down the trees. A concerned neighbour received a demolition notice for Woodfield House from Bradford's building control department with a start date of 2 June: it arrived on 9 June.

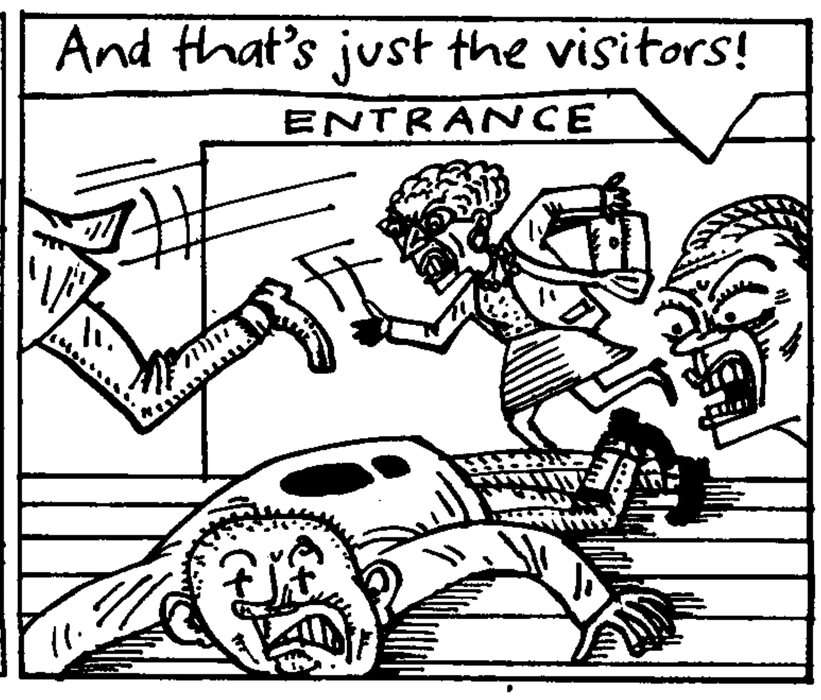
Permission from the planning department was still required, however, and the house is temporarily safe as pipistrelle bats have been found in the roof (it's a criminal offence of course to disturb them). An application to list the building has been made but, unfortunately, there is at present no prohibition of demolition while English Heritage considers a case. The fate of Woodfield House seems therefore to depend on whether Bradford council wants to maintain its reputation as one of the most vandalistic in Britain. How interesting that the former chief planning officer, Jo Steel, now acts for Halton Homes as a "private planning consultant".

Meanwhile the diocese of Bradford has announced that the village's vicarage, a handsome Victorian gabled stone house, is to be demolished after standing empty for two years, to be replaced by three new houses - although it could perfectly well be refurbished and lived in. So much for the C of E's commitment to sustainability and the environment. What has Cullingworth done to deserve such gratuitous vandalism?

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH



BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE European parliament put South West Tory MEP Caroline Jackson in charge of European *rubbish* rules, making her the "rapporteur" responsible for steering the "Waste Framework Directive" into action. This powerful regulation says how rubbish should be treated throughout Europe: how much should be recycled, buried or burnt, etc.

With Jackson's help, the directive reclassifies incineration as "recovery" rather than plain old "disposal", so long as some energy is generated by burning the trash. The reclassification is pure gold for the incineration industry, which can now say its burners are actually recycling and are part of the war against global warming.

"This has commercial and public relations advantages," Jackson herself said in a press release.

One of the firms enjoying these advantages is rubbish and incineration firm Shanks, which coincidentally employs Jackson as a board member. Jackson's spokesman said that she had declared the job, adding that this was not a conflict of interest but rather that the South West MEP "finds it useful to see things from the industry side as well".

Meanwhile staff at the Global Alliance Against Incinerators (GAIA), which brings together campaigners against polluting incinerators throughout Europe, were startled to find that until 2006, Jackson's husband Robert, former MP for Wantage, was a director of another company, CNIM UK, whose principal activity is "incineration of waste".

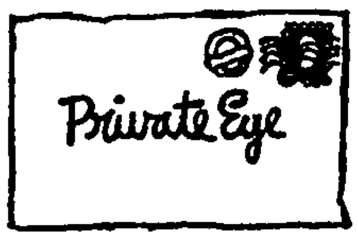
THE EU's house bank is also a fan of the burning: the European Investment Bank has backed nearly €1bn-worth (£790m) of new incinerators.

More than two-thirds of the bank's lending to the EU's vast waste disposal industry since 2001 has gone towards construction of yet more polluting incinerators – some in countries that don't yet have recycling facilities. A report by the Central and Eastern Europe Bankwatch Network has found that in the same period, just £13m of EIB finance went to supporting recycling schemes.

The report highlights plans by the Croatian city of Zagreb for an incinerator burning 385,000 tons of municipal waste and sewage sludge a year. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has already got cold feet and pulled out, but the EIB is still considering financing the £134m scheme. Local campaigners point out that Zagreb has spent less than £4m on recycling and that Croatia already has nowhere to put a 250-ton pile of toxic ash left from an earlier, failed incinerator scheme. The new incinerator would produce lots more.

But it's not just in eastern Europe that waste firms are winning EU-backed finance. In 2006, the EIB provided a £94m loan to the controversial public/private partnership deal between Cornwall county council and SITA UK, which includes plans for a "waste-to-energy" incinerator near St Dennis. The bank didn't even wait for an environmental impact assessment to be carried out before approving the loan.

Letters



White mischief

Sir,

Racism in the Met Police is nothing new. Throughout my career as a detective I ran into problems and yet I never put a foot wrong. Every murder case I worked on was solved and, as I progressed through the ranks and reached a level where I took charge of investigations, I led ten major murder cases and solved all of them. I arrested and dealt with Dennis Nilsen the biggest (in terms of victims) serial killer we had ever seen. In spite of my experience and ability I only reached the rank of Detective Chief Inspector. Of course this was because I was white – there could have been no other reason. Assistant Commissioner Ghaffur is right to complain and perhaps, one day, we will have lots of Commissioners of the Metropolis – all non-white.

PETER JAY,

Via email.

Cider with Mugabe

Sir,

Re the cover of Issue 1213 – since when is Mugabe a West Country man? "The opposition were soundly beaten"? Presumably that opposition was soundly beaten while I were drinking my cider.

Yours pedantically,
ROBIN PHILPOTT,

Via email.

Lookalike

Jones

Betancourt

Sir,

I couldn't help noticing the astonishing resemblance between Ingrid Betancourt, who over the course of her six-year captivity in Colombia had little to do but endlessly and obsessively mull over the details of her own wretched situation, and the Daily Mail journalist Liz Jones. Are they by any chance related, and would FARC consider taking Jones in Betancourt's place?

Yours,
ENA B. OGOTA,

Via email.

Mammary lane

Sir,

Re your photo of Val Singleperson and the caption "Here's one I laid earlier". Is there any relation between this and a photo in your magazine in the early/mid-90s of Catherine Zeta Jones and John Leslie which bore a strikingly similar caption? Or am I being unfair in expecting you to recall a specific incident from the mid-90s... not unlike Mr Leslie himself, in fact.

MATTHEW JONES,

Via email.

Mote in the Eye

Sir,

So MEPs failed to listen to their colleague Ashley Mote when he quoted Edmund Burke at them (Brussels Sprouts, Eye 1213). Could their attitude have anything to do with his nine-month jail sentence for benefit fraud?

MICHAEL BATH,

Via email.

Humber servant

Sir,

My proposal to raise the threshold that allows groups of MEPs to access extra taxpayers' money by forming a political group in the European Parliament will have absolutely no effect on independent MEPs and it is preposterous to suggest I intend to wipe them out (Brussel Sprouts, Eye 1213).

Far from a "Faustian" plot, it simply brings the European Parliament closer into line with most parliaments around the world which have thresholds for forming groups far higher than the current level of 2.5% and my suggested level of 4%. My proposals do not remove any of the parliamentary prerogatives of individual MEPs. But they will make it more difficult for the far-right to form a group and help themselves to taxpayers' money. Or does Private Eye advocate granting public money to Neo-Nazi groups?

Yours,
RICHARD CORBETT,

Labour MEP for Yorkshire & Humber.

● *Our Brussels Correspondent writes: Mr Corbett's plan would effectively marginalise the Green party, Communists and ex-Gaullists with Le Pen, and wipe out the 23 existing Independent and Democratic MEPs. No doubt this was why the Constitutional Affairs Committee member, Danish Ind/Dem MEP Hanne Dahl, said: "Mr Corbett's proposal goes against democracy."*

Neo con?

Sir,

I may be a fan of Wagner, but I'm no Neo-Nazi as claimed in your article (Media News 1213). My intention in publishing ***The Walls of Auschwitz, a Review of the Chemical Studies*** *was to open an intelligent debate on a taboo subject. As a science historian, could I not be allowed a critique of evidence as regards where exactly the Zyklon-B (cyanide) had been used? People tell me I should have more considered the anguish such a debate would cause – and yet, we are able to debate the holocausts of other cultures, such as the Native Americans. Please, Mr Editor, don't call me a 'neo-Nazi'. I've never affiliated to any right-wing political group or movement. I managed the Green Party for 12 years in Guildford and have always worked within peace and anti-war movements.*

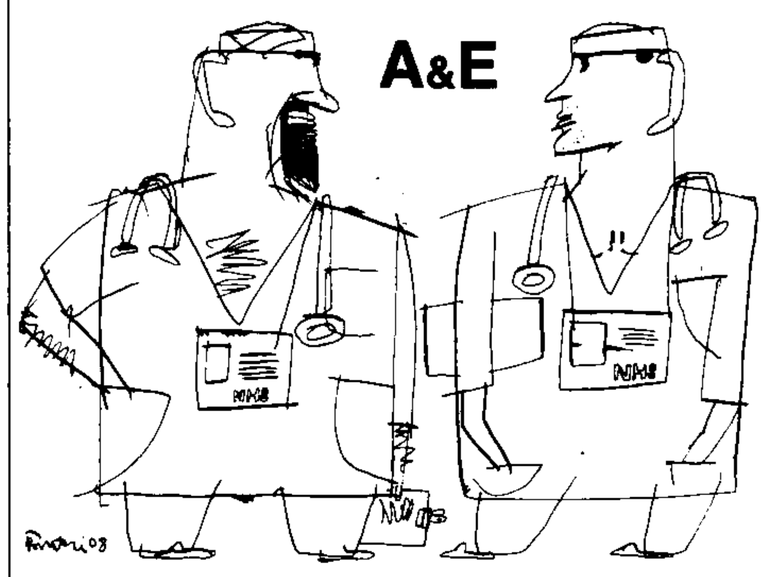
Yours truly,
NICK KOLLERSTROM,

London NW3.

● *Ratbiter writes: For goodness' sake what's this country coming to when you can't call a Holocaust denier a neo-Nazi? He supports the David Irving line that Jews weren't killed at Auschwitz; instead they relaxed by swimming pools. All his sources are neo-Nazi sources. And he's now in league with the propagandists of a state which wants to kill all the Jews.*

What the hell am I meant to call him, a Liberal Democrat?

Scenes You Seldom See



"Same here. Not one alcohol-related admission all night"

Case notes

Sir,

Re "Correct Diagnosis". Mr Worksett's defence of the record of ISTCs (Eye 1213) cannot go unchallenged.

The study he quotes is a comparison of three types of operation done in a selection of ISTCs and NHS hospitals. The authors themselves state that "Patients treated in ISTCs were healthier, were less likely to have any comorbidity and, for those undergoing cataract surgery or joint replacement, their primary condition was less severe. Those undergoing hernia repair or joint replacement were less likely to have had similar surgery before."

The outcomes were measured by various methods, all patients administered, and the broad conclusion was that the outcomes between the 2 types of centre were similar, but there were certain caveats and the broad conclusions were guarded and again I quote: "The case-mix of patients treated in ISTCs differs from that in NHS providers, in line with the intention of the contracts. Caution is needed in interpreting the observation that patients treated in ISTCs reported slightly better outcomes as very few ISTCs participated, case-mix adjustment might have been insufficient, and patients' reports might have been biased as they were more likely to be satisfied with the way they were treated."

Only 796 patients from the ISTCs were available compared to 1895 from the NHS.

The paper proves only that, given the best possible circumstances, the healthiest patients with the least complicated pathology and using only patient administered assessment criteria, the ISTCs, on a much smaller sample, were the equivalent in success to the NHS centres. Where other criteria are employed, such as objective assessment by surgeons of x-rays or of joint function, so that conclusions can be drawn on technical expertise employed in the surgery, and on the likely durability of the joint replacements, the picture painted by my colleague Mr Forster, and others in a recent presentation to the annual meeting of the British Association for Surgery of the Knee, is very different. In relation to our own ISTC-like establishment, he found rates of failure and malalignment of the implants and the need for re-do surgery to be extremely high, and certainly at a level deemed unacceptable by most practising surgeons. A similar study in our institution, on the outcome of hip surgery, found similar outcomes. It is also in the nature of ISTCs that these unsuccessful cases, so very difficult, time-consuming and expensive to treat, land up at the door of the local NHS facility, as the ISTCs are, if nothing else, the ultimate cherry-pickers.

Regards,
CHRIS WILSON,

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, University Hospital, Cardiff.

Red whine

Sir,

In issue 1212 in your media pages, you point an accusing finger at the Daily Mail. Their problem seems to be that they are taking a stance at a drinking problem and at the same time peddling cheap booze through the advertising pages. Fair enough.

Imagine my surprise in getting to the back of the same issue of your magazine and finding a full page colour advertisement flogging a crate of Spanish Rioja at half price.

Tell me, who are the pots here, who are the kettles, and which ones are black ?

Regards
DAVID BLOOR,
Holyhead, Wales.

Lookalike

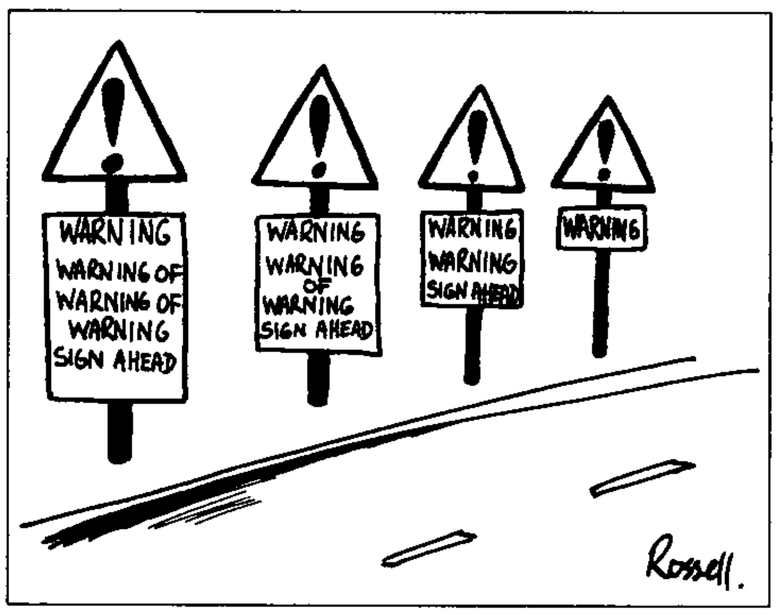
Bean

Sarkozy

Sir,

We are told that the recent rescue of Ms Betancourt is due in large part to infiltration of FARC by agents, and in some part to the French president. Is there any chance the French (and EU) presidency has in fact been infiltrated by cunning agents provocateurs?

I think we should be told (if only in mime).
KEN TOUGH.
Vancouver, Canada.



Colemanballs

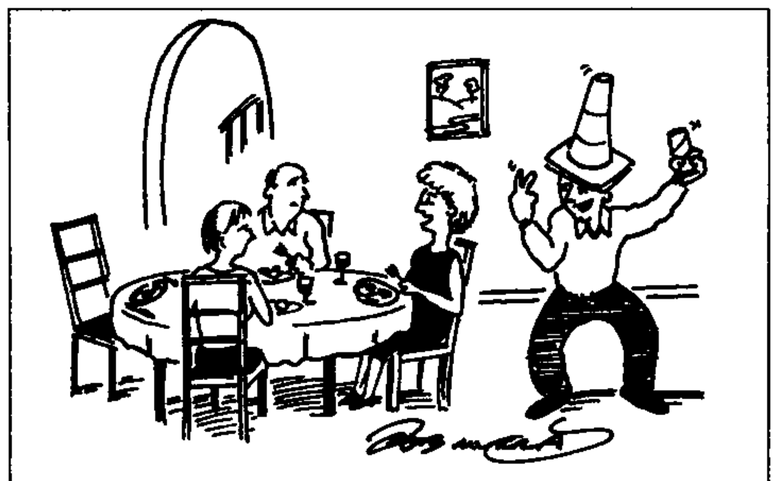
£10 paid for contributions

"It would help if the groundsman didn't scatter his seed around the place a couple of days before the match."
JONATHAN AGNEW, Radio 4
(Richard Bluer)

"... the electrical storm in Vienna that literally left the whole world in the dark."
Commentator, BBC
(Jez Caudle)

"Andy Murray: the last British man in the men's or women's draw."
JOHN INVERDALE, BBC2
(James Donnelly)

"30 per cent of the black players [in the Premiership] are black..."
PAUL ELLIOT, Radio 5 Live
(Chris)



"Nigel and I both wish we'd had the opportunity to go to university, don't we, dear?"

Pedantry Corner

Sir,

So the Dutch "started favourites to win Euro 2008" (Media News, Eye 1213). Don't think so. You must have meant Germany. It's next door.
HAROLD HEYS.

... The choice of title adopted for your green column – Eco Worrier (© The Times), followed by Eco Soundings (© The Guardian – since 1989) suggests you really need to Persaud a different tack.
KEITH L. HARRISON.

... Like many other students in North Herts, I have always been under the impression that it is the town of Stevenage that has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Europe.
DAVID BAGG.

... Much as I enjoyed Paul Wood's cartoon with flat-pack wolves, surely the point about flat packs is that they are flat, not cuboid as shown in the cartoon. A little more care with the drawing would surely have made for enhanced enjoyment.
BEN GRANGER.

... With regard to Nigel Pearson's What's your problem? cartoon (page 21, Eye 1213). Having spent countless hours over the years trying to solve Fermat's last theorem (and failing miserably) I feel compelled to point out that the theorem is actually $X^3 + Y^3 \neq Z^3$ rather than $X^n + Y^n = Z^n$ as stated. Many apologies for being so dull.
EDGAR COLLIANDER.

... So Gareth Proctor is a Trekky and a Pedant (Letters, Eye 1213).
I bet he's fun at parties!
MIKE GIGGLER.

... Re cartoon of the wheelybin (p. 11, Eye 1213). The wheels should be on the same side of the bin as the lid hinge. The way it is drawn, when one goes to move the bin the wheels will come off the ground. Or was it drawn deliberately like that so I would have to write in!
BERNARD PEEL.

... Jez and Quin would never bring themselves to say "Taste the Transvaal", as that is a relic of the old apartheid South Africa, rather than truly representative of the right-on Rainbow Nation of today. "Gauteng gastronomy" would be more like it.

Biltong comes in dry form; that's what makes it biltong. What are those rashers of bacon doing on that lampshade?
LLOYD WOOD.

... A clergyman writes: We are indebted to the Eye for its meaningful and relevant liturgies over the years, but why oh why do you persist with the typeface of the defunct Rocky Horror Service Book? Since 2000 the font of choice for the Common Worship family of volumes is Gill Sans or, if you prefer, Humanist as we use in our parish magazine.
MICHAEL AINSWORTH.

Letter from **Vanuatu**

from Our Own Correspondent

VANUATU may not launder nearly as much money as Manhattan or the City of London, and it has not hit the news as often as crime-riddled Liechtenstein. But with our palm-fringed beaches and exotic south pacific location, at least we look like a proper tax haven.

So imagine the chagrin of Robert Agius at being prevented from returning to his own island paradise, when he was arrested in May by Australian police at Perth airport. Sporting one Australian, two British and two Vanuatu passports (and four different birth dates), Agius had joined a small but happy band of expatriate lawyers and accountants who have turned our island into a lucrative tax-dodgers' paradise. Agius, it seems, had been helping 400 wealthy Australians with "tax optimisation strategies." The Australian police called it an A$100m money-laundering scheme.

Back in 1970, when the New Hebrides was still an outpost of the British empire, bankers had the bright idea of setting up branches here, lured by extensive secrecy, a total lack of income or profits taxes, and freedom from irritating banking regulations – in other words, an "innovative" tax regime. They set up trust companies and company registration services to help rich people and corporate treasurers "streamline" their income tax.

The Foreign Office generally thought this a good wheeze: the income from our "agile and flexible" tax status offered an alternative to growing coconut palms and reduced the aid bill for British taxpayers. Never mind that the Inland Revenue had pointed out that tax evasion might cost the British Treasury far more. And as for taxpayers from Australia and elsewhere – who cares?

After independence in 1980, a cabal of expats and their local cronies helped attract ever more exotic characters. One was Thomas Bayer, a former US army veteran in Vietnam. Not content with a trust company, a boutique bank and related companies, he also won the contract to operate our shipping registry in 1993 – the year he became the first chairman of our Financial Services Authority. His bank came a cropper in a fraud scandal and he was made the subject of an international arrest warrant. In 2000 he told members of the US senate's permanent subcommittee on investigations (who were probing colourful Russian activity) that he wasn't sure who owned our offshore banks – even though he was their regulator.

Then 9/11 happened. Pressed by the US to clean up our act, we revamped our banking laws in 2002. To the delight of many who disapprove of our tax status, countless shell banks closed, and offshore bank assets fell by two thirds. Then they began to climb again in 2006. That is, until the Australian police snaffled Mr Agius.

Peddlers of offshore sleaze squeal with indignation whenever the authorities try to tackle their crimes. Meanwhile Agius' chums are outraged that Australian police were present in raids carried out by Vanuatu police after his arrest. The raids were "a contrived fishing expedition", they harrumphed, as they sought to block the use of evidence collected in Vanuatu - arguing that the investigation concerns tax, which is not a criminal matter here!

Willie Jimmy, our finance minister, attacked the Australian moves as a deliberate attempt to abolish our tax haven industry. This is the same Willie Jimmy whom our ombudsman, in a 1997 report over a scandal surrounding the National Provident Fund, recommended should resign, avoid public office and not be employed again in a position involving public money. Agius' lawyer fumed that the Australian government wanted to throw "a veil of criminality" over the accounting company. "The people in Vanuatu were service providers, that's all they do," he whined. So that's all right then.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Being an astronaut might seem like a glamorous profession," scientist Jin Xu-Kai told reporters in Guanghua Town in Sichuan, "but there are some embarrassing aspects to life in outer space. Because of zero gravity, astronauts often suffer from constipation, and the traditional method of evacuation has always been to use an air pump. However, air pumps are expensive, bulky, and difficult to use. They require five days of training to learn how to operate one, they have a high failure rate, and the shock to the body can be almost as bad as the constipation itself. That's why I have spent the past three years developing a safer and more efficient alternative, the Rectal Excavator.

"This new invention will ease the suffering of astronauts everywhere. Essentially, it features a cylindrical 'double-screw reamer' which is inserted into the anal cavity, where it excavates and removes the blockage, rather like a more sophisticated version of an Archimedes' screw. Astronauts would need only five to seven minutes to relieve their constipation with my device, and although I experienced some slight discomfort when I tried it myself, that was nothing compared to the miseries and sufferings of constipation in space. The China National Space Administration has already expressed interest in my invention, and my Rectal Excavator may be carried on future space missions. I am also showing it to hospitals, because it could also be used for medical purposes here on earth." *(South China Morning Post, 24/5/08. Spotter: Roger Gillan)*

– ● –

● *Sir, My brother-in-law recently went through security at Auckland domestic airport, and witnessed a passenger having to fish out her nail scissors from her handbag and leave them behind. He passed through security, then boarded his plane.*

After being seated, he realised that he could smell petrol. He knew that you shouldn't be able to smell petrol on a plane, because planes don't use petrol. The smell got worse, and eventually he attracted the attention of one of the flight attendants, who started to look around to see where it was coming from. After a short search of the overhead compartments, the attendant found a chainsaw in a bag that was leaking petrol into the compartment.

The plane was delayed while the owner was identified, and the chainsaw was removed and put with the main luggage. The owner of the chainsaw said security had stopped him and

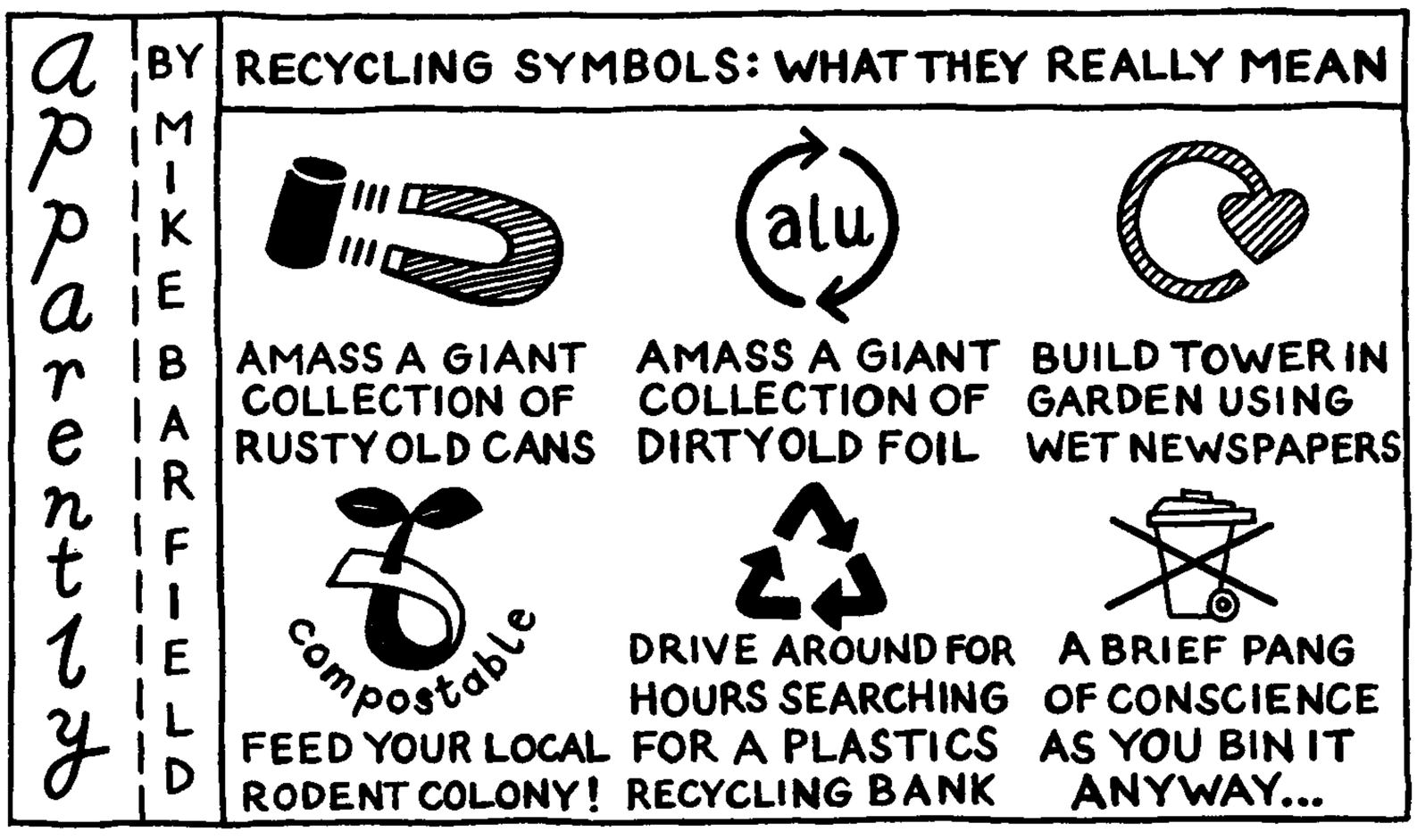
asked him about it, but had let him through because it wasn't one of the things on their list to confiscate. (Letter to New Zealand Herald, 12/5/08. Spotter: Dominic Casciani)

– ● –

● "Reincarnation therapy is a valid method of getting the long-term unemployed back to work," Social Affairs councillor Luc Winants told reporters in Maastricht. "The idea is that a ten-week course of regression therapy will help welfare claimants to come to terms with their past lives and regain their balance, and this will help them to find jobs. The scheme is still in its early stages, but in the future, long-term unemployed Dutch citizens may be required to undergo past-life regression, or risk losing their welfare benefits."

Klaas Boffcher of the Ruach Boraka Centre for Complementary Therapy was enthusiastic about the new scheme. "The technique helps people find experiences from past identities that could be negatively affecting them today. It is very useful. When someone has a problem finding work, it is often more about their need to find out about themselves. Reincarnation therapy can help, because people's complaints and problems have causes not just in the present, but also in previous lives."

Marcus Huibers, a senior lecturer in clinical psychology at Maastricht University, was unimpressed by the council's publicly-funded initiative, which costs 900 euros for a ten-session course. "We are speaking here of an entirely obscure therapy that does not even merit the term 'therapy'," he told reporters. *(De Limburger, 11/4/08, and Colorado Springs Independent, 8/5/08. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*



From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Brown's anniversary as PM

They used to say that if you took what Tony Blair had and bottled it, you would have a recipe for success. Well, Brown took what Tony Blair had and BOTTLED IT, but it hasn't done him much good! Oi!! – ***Oggy_oggy_oggy***

I see the Army has reviewed the ration and got rid of Biscuits Brown. Perhaps they could now review the *nation* and get rid of Bottler Brown. I know my stomach would feel better for it! – ***Brown_out***

browns anaversry as priminister and the 60-eth anaversry of the nhs survace. do the math! the nhs survace is a national icon and ENVY OF THE WORLD like red telaphone box's, city gent's in polar hat's, trouping the coloureds, roger moor lift-ing the world cup, british Beef, feet and inch's and strawberry's and cream at Wimbleden. "BUT" warning! Nu labour nu dang-er!!! WAKE UP! r prescius heritege is UNDER THREATT from the traters of wesminster led by the scotish trater brown – even r beutiful beloved languige is ruined by gcse examiner's givin marks for writ-ing **** OFF! (he wrote the actiel word in the exam but I wont spel it out – swaring is the sign of a poor vocabury) – ***Broken_Britan***

ur so rite nu labour is distroy-ing r national acorns 1 by 1. wimbelden is a disgrace, i ws watch-ing wen the comanteter sayd lets go over 2 henman hill an I cud hardly beleve my eyres? "WHYE" is wimbelden naming a hill aftr that nu labour traiter HARIET HENMAN whu has soled out r cuntry 2 the foreiners and human rites lowyers an never suport's r boy's on the sport feeld or the battle feeld – ***England_3568***

u cant call her henman its sexist it shud b henperson! lol! – ***Darling_Deneyze***

hen is sex-ist, shud be BIRDPERSON – ***Prima_Donut***

thats sexist 2, cant call a woman a bird any more! shoud b personperson – ***Danny_Daz***

cant say forty love in tennis no more, the word LOVE is sex-ist an harriot don't like it! – ***Wee_Billy_Dunn***

LOL! Great stuff guys! – Bogbrush

Families have private vocabularies

Like most families, we have our little sayings and phrases – oiks are "Garys", females are "Gillians", bottoms are "chuffers", and so on. And no one asks for brown sauce at our breakfast table. It's always, "Pass the Bottler Brown sauce!" – ***Brown_out***

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 24

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades!

The whole world has rightly been shocked by the behaviour of our fellow leader Comrade Mugabe. In his desperate attempts to cling onto power when the entire nation had turned against him, he has reduced his once-proud country to the condition of an international basket-case.

To show that we will not tolerate such outrageous actions for a moment longer, I have ordered Comrade Miliband to issue a warning to Comrade Mugabe in the strongest possible terms that if he continues on the path of genocide we will regard him as totally unacceptable and he will incur my extreme displeasure.

Furthermore, I have not hesitated to back up this warning with firm unilateral action. It was on my personal orders that President Mugabe was stripped of the honour bestowed on him by a previous regime – Knight of the Long Knives (First Class).

Let us not forget that former Comrade Sir Mugabe was once regarded as a beacon of hope for his people.

As a young man he was a committed Socialist, filled with idealistic hopes for a brighter future.

But he then had to wait patiently for many years before he could put his vision of an Age of Change into practise.

Unfortunately, his long period of waiting had soured him and he became incapable of taking any criticism.

Having inherited a prosperous economy that was the envy of the world, he frittered it away by reckless overspending in an attempt to buy popularity that became increasingly elusive.

His obsession with security led him to take increasingly high-handed measures against his people, not hesitating to lock them up for as much as 42 days without trial in defence of the diktats of natural justice.

Today this discredited figure takes his despotic rule to new levels of authoritarian high-handedness.

Again and again he has refused his people their right to take part in fair and properly run elections.

Having assumed power without an election, he loses no opportunity to demonstrate his contempt for the principles of democratic accountability, by shutting the door over all expressions of the popular will.

What an appalling example he is to supreme leaders everywhere, and there is no doubt that this reviled and hated bully will soon be consigned to oblivion in accordance with the dialectic of historical inevitability.

Signed

Gordon Brown

The Supreme Leader

An Edict From The Equality Commissar Comrade Harriet Harperson

Comrades,

It is time to break the hated glass ceiling which has prevented women rising to the top jobs in the State despite their superior abilities. We know of cases where incompetent men have clung onto their positions when it is clear that they are entirely useless at carrying out the basic demands of the job.

In such cases, surely equality demands that the male comrade should hand over to a highly-respected senior female comrade who could prove herself equally useless in no time at all. **H.H.**

An Important Message To All Britons

From now on, all Comrades are warned against throwing away uneaten food after indulging in decadent two-for-oneism.

When the world is threatened with a serious food shortage caused by the needs of our motorist for eco-friendly biofuels, it is surely a crime to pamper ourselves with surplus consumer edibles. Comrades are now advised to stick to the following "Austerity Diet" from the *'Little Red Cookery Book'*, compiled by Comrade Blears.

Breakfast *Potato Peelings with milk and sugar, Toasted leftovers and Grilled Fishkins*

Lunch *Recycled Cabbage Soup with Bread Crust Croutons, followed by Apple Core and Orange Skin Puree*

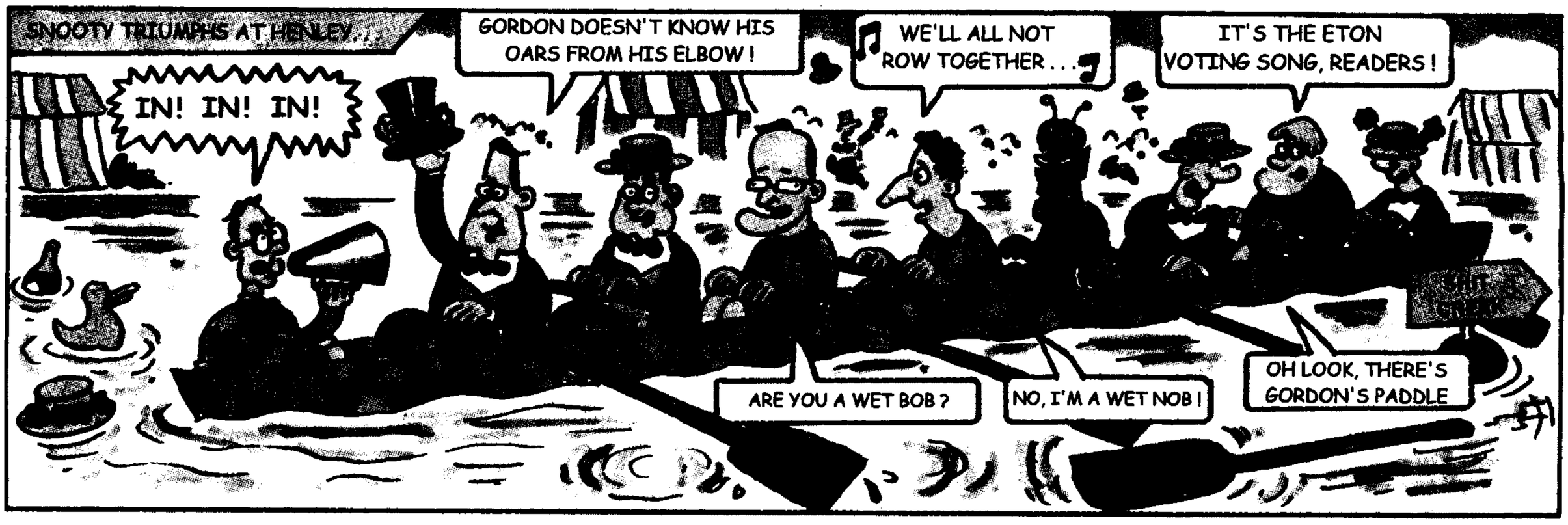
Supper *There will be no supper in the Age of Change*

Midnight Snack *One Glass of Nutritious Bath Water*

Forward to a Healthier Britain!

Signed Comrade Brown, The Supreme Dieter

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS



MAYOR SCANDAL – CAMERON CLAIMS 'I WAS MISLED'

by Our Political Staff **Andrew Marrgarine**

TORY LEADER David Cameron today admitted his embarrassment after it was revealed that one of his exciting new political appointments had a chequered past.

He said, "I appointed Boris in good faith and thought he was the right man for the job. Now it turns out that he was not entirely candid about his previous controversial career."

Pick A Ninny

However, many senior figures are claiming that they warned Cameron some time ago that he was taking "a terrible risk" in appointing "a bizarre but flawed character" to such an important job.

The charges against Boris include:

- Using a mobile phone whilst cycling.
- Offending the people of Liverpool and Portsmouth.
- Serial womanising, and then lying about it.
- Associating with known criminal Darius Guppy and engaging in a conspiracy to commit GBH.
- Worst of all, editing the Spectator magazine for a number of years and employing Taki Takalotofcokupthenos, a notorious drug smuggler and racist.

Said David Cameron: "I promise to hold a full enquiry into Boris Johnson – after which he will have no option but to stay on."

IN THE COURTS

Sir Max Mosley vs the *News Of The Screws*. Before Mr Justice Cocklecarrot. Day One.

Sir Ephraim Hugefee *(for Sir Max Mosley)*: My Lord, I represent Sir Smacks... I'm terribly sorry... Sir Max Mosley, one of the most distinguished figures in the world of international motor sport. It will be our case that Sir Whacks... I mean Sir Max... was innocently taking part in a private orgy involving a number of sado-maxochistic... er... masochistic practices which were nobody's business except Sir Muck's... Sir Max's.

Justice Cocklecarrot: Would now be an appropriate time for us to see the video of the orgy?

Sir Ephraim: We will get on to that, Your Honour, in due course, but I must first reiterate our case that the *News of the Screws* acted entirely improperly in breaching my client's human rights under European law to remove his undergarments and to receive correction at the hands of a number of young ladies dressed in uniforms who...

Cocklecarrot *(interrupting)*: I do think it would help if we could show the video now so that we can see precisely how Sir Max's privacy has been infringed by these terrible journalists.

Sir Ephraim: My Lord, showing this innocent scene of erotic roleplay would serve no function, but might prove painful for my client.

Foreman of the Jury: Then he will probably enjoy it!

Scott-Carrot: May I remind the court that this is a very serious case indeed, involving highly important matters of legal principle. So let us get on with the video. If the usher would be so kind as to pull down the blinds...

Sir Ephraim: I am indebted to Your Lordship.

(The case continues)

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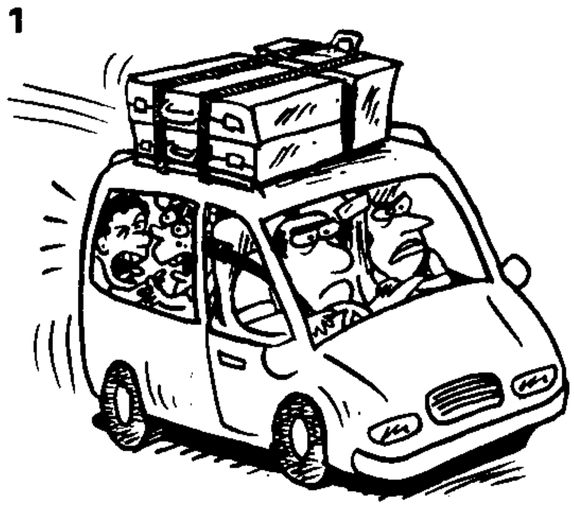
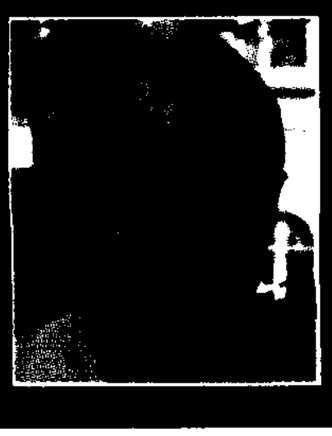


2

It's Your Line To Red Ken On LBC



Red Ken *(for it is he)*: Our next caller is Reg from Canvey Island. Hello, Reg. What's your point?

Reg: Hello, Ken. Did you see the final of the tennis? What a game! Would you say it was the best ever?

Ken: He's only been in the job for a fortnight and it's already gone pear-shaped, just like I said it would. There's only one rightful Mayor of London and that's me.

Reg: Thanks very much, Ken. It's a pleasure to talk to you.

Ken: Next caller is Doris from Dollis Hill. Hello, Doris.

Doris: Hello, Ken! This G8... I mean, what's it all about?

Ken: That's exactly what I'm saying, Doris. What has Boris ever done for London? Nothing. Londoners have only got themselves to blame. And it's only going to get worse, just like I always said it would. Next caller, please.

Caller: Hello, Ken. It's Monty from Muswell Hill.

Ken: Hello, Monty.

Monty: That Boris Johnson, I mean his referendum on the Congestion Charge has got to be good for London, Ken, hasn't it? Gotta admit it.

Ken: This weather we're having is terrible. Call this a summer? Nearly ruined the tennis. Did you see it, by the way? Must have been the best match ever *(cont. 94 kHz)*

ARCTIC NEWS

LABOUR PARTY 'MELTING AWAY'

by **Ant** and **Dec Arctic**

THERE were fears yesterday for the future of the Labour Party when a survey revealed that it was disappearing even faster than scientists feared.

"We did a test yesterday which showed that the Labour Party is now only 2% of its former size," said one expert.

North Poll

"It's melting down, breaking up and huge chunks of it are just floating into the middle distance."

The scientists were quick to pin the blame on the disastrous effects of climate change.

Disintegrating

"Things have recently got too hot for the Labour Party, which used to be very cool, but is now turning to slush."

Environmentalists are deeply worried that this could spell the end for endangered species like the Polar Bore *(Gordonus brownis miserabilis)* and *(cont. p. 94°F)*

ARCHBISHOP LASHES REBELS

by Our Religious Affairs Correspondent **Clifford Longford**

AS THE Church of England faces its worst crisis in more than two millennia, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Very Reverend Rowan Atkinson, last night launched a savage attack on all those church leaders who are planning a breakaway "Church within a Church" in protest against the liberalisation of the Church's stand towards women and homosexuals.

In a forthright message delivered to the leaders of FOCOFF, the newly formed Federation of Christian Orthodoxy For Faith, the Archbishop hit out at those conservatives who have been defying his authority in language more outspoken than anything heard from a churchman for more than 2000 years.

That Amazing Attack In Full

"You know, it really is time for a period of reflection by both sides, giving us all the opportunity to give considered and prayerful thought to ways in which we can each learn to appreciate the deeply held views of the other side in order to find that common ground which it is necessary to achieve the synthesis which can provide the basis for our moving together towards a... er... and now Hymn 94..."

SCHISM 2008

Six To Watch

Bishop Gene Kelly, 43, Bishop of New Dworkin, the first gay man to hold episcopal office in the history of the Church (apart from all the others). Gene's ambition is to see a lesbian as the Archbishop of Canterbury. "Then the Church will truly have entered the 21st Century," he says, "and it'll really annoy all those ghastly Africans."

Zechariah Onanugu, 78, Bishop of Rumbabwe (formerly the British Rumbabaland Protectorate). Onanugu claims that the Bible calls for the castration of all male homosexuals, and wants to see the Archbishop burnt at the stake as a heretic. "Then the Church will truly have entered the 15th Century," says Onanugu, "and it'll serve Beardie right for his suckin' up to all those awful shirtlifters."

The Right Rev. J.C. Flannel, Suffragan Bishop of Bluewater. Flannel has long been known for his outspoken insistence that there is a lot to be said for both sides. "The Church is at a crossroads," he says, "and it is up to each and every one of us to choose one road or the other."

The Right Rev. Bazza Billabong, 59, Bishop of New South Blighty, Australia. Billabong is an unrepentant traditionalist who believes that the Book of Leviticus has made it unequivocally clear that, as he puts it, "God's got no time for blokes who play leapfrog in the shower, if you know what I mean. And as for ordaining Sheilas, strewth, I'd rather take Communion from a drunken abo in Digger's Creek along with a congregation of Kangaroos. No offence."

"Bishop Judy" Garland, 51, formerly Archdeacon Milton Z. Krauthammer of the breakaway "First Church of Christ the Transvestite" in San Francisco. "Bishop Judy" is the first Anglican bishop to wear a dress (apart from all the others) and is said to have the largest collection of Shirley Bassey records in the world.

Advertisement

IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? NO IT'S...

SUPERBISHOP!

The Church of England is facing its greatest crisis since the Reformation. Can anyone save it?

Yes, this is a job for ***SUPERBISHOP!***

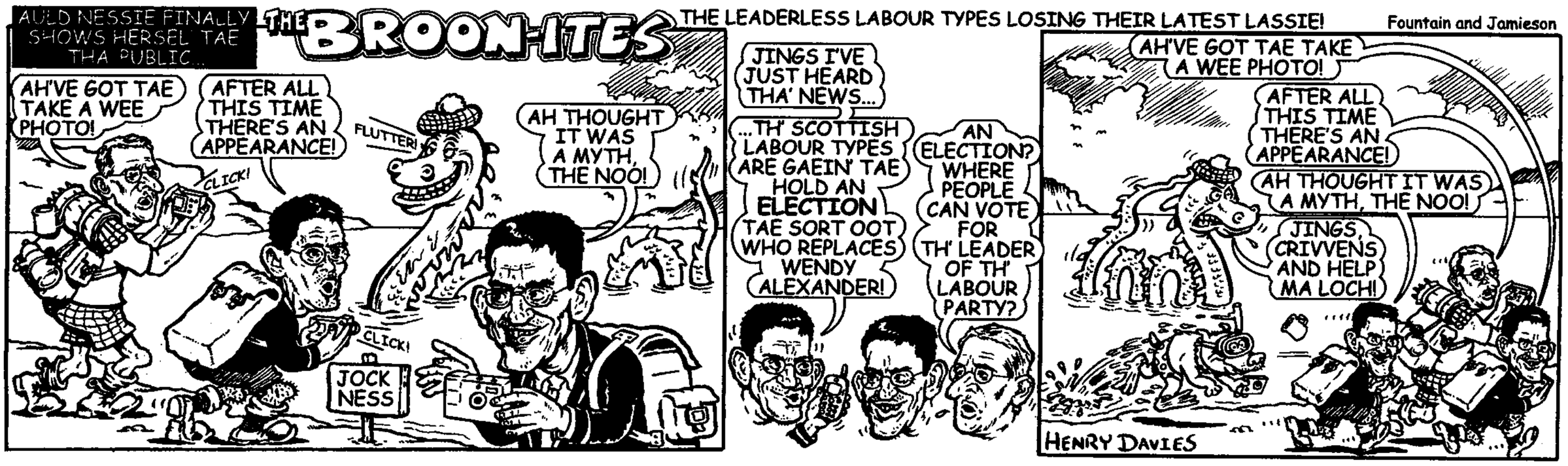
By day a mild-mannered clerk in Holy Orders but when danger calls he slips into the vestry and turns into ***SUPERBISHOP!***

POW! He oversees the problems of congregations who won't accept a woman bishop!

ZAP! He transports them to remote parishes where they will be administered to by a traditional male bishop!

WHAM! They all fly off to join the Catholic Church anyway!

Don't miss SUPERBISHOP – at a church near you



POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0810 hrs All officers attended tribunal hearing into complaint by Chief Inspector Knaqa that he had been the victim of a sustained campaign of racist discrimination which had resulted in him becoming the first-ever Moslem to be made Chief Inspector.

Officers gave evidence on both sides at a hearing likely to last several weeks. All costs will be taken from operational budget of Neasden police service.

1200 hrs Desk Sergeant Rickmansworth reported ten calls from members of the public recorded on station answerphone during the morning. These all related to allegations that the callers were being fatally knifed by young persons. Sgt Rickmansworth noted that this compared with 20 such calls received the previous day, indicating a 50 per cent drop in violent crime levels in the Neasden district. This exceeded the government target by 43.75 per cent, a very welcome development which was immediately communicated to the office of the Secretary of State for Justice, Mr Straw.

1400 hrs After a celebratory lunch at the Star of Neasden Balti House, all officers returned to the resumed tribunal hearings into the case of Inspector Knaqa. Giving evidence in Urdu, Inspector Knaqa alleged through a translator that he had not been given the job of Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police solely because he had refused to participate in lager-drinking contests at the Slug & Laptop public house with other senior officers.

1700 hrs All officers attended seminar on 'The Growing Prevalence of Knife Crime – Perception or Reality?', given by Professor Roy Beard of the Department of Criminology and Media Studies at the University of Neasden (formerly The World Of Leather). Professor Beard told officers that his study had identified as the root cause of knife crime the fact that many young people these days carry knives.

Following the Professor's lectures, he was treated to a showing of the Neasden police station's latest contribution to YouTube – an amusing 10-minute video entitled "You Haven't Been Nicked!" This shows Neasden officers driving in squad cars at high speed into walls, ponds, shop windows and pensioners waiting at bus stops.

1830 hrs It was decided that, due to the over-running of the seminar, the tribunal to hear allegations of bullying against Sergeants Upminster and Theydon-Bois would have to be held over until next week. The Sergeants are accused of having ordered PCs to the alleged scenes of crimes involving knives, in order to investigate and apprehend the perpetrators. The PCs had rightly told the Sergeants to "fuck off" as these orders clearly contravened health and safety requirements which forbid exposing employees to any unnecessary risk. Officers therefore returned to the Star of Neasden to engage in a sponsored 'lassi-drinking competition' with their popular and much-loved colleague Inspector Knaqa. All funds to go to 'Non-Offensive Booties For Neasden Sniffer Dogs' Appeal.

Let's Parlez Franglais!

Numero 94

A dialogue on the vexed issue of protectionism versus free-trade avec Sarko et Mandy!

Sarko: Sacre bleu, Mandy, vous avez un nerve! Vous voulez putter mes farmers sur le dole, n'est ce pas?

Mandy: Ha, ha, ha, trés amusant, mon ami. Votre little joke. Nous sommes tous sur le meme side-vive Europe, vive le free trade.

Sarko: Idiot! Cochon! Rosbif! Vous etes un laughing stock.

Mandy: Vous can talk, matey, avec votre oo-la-la avec Mlle Bruni et votre platform shoes.

Sarko: Watchez votre step, matelot. Je suis le grand President de l'Europe! Et vous etes seulement un ami de le washed-up M. Blair.

Mandy: How darez vous? Maintenant je suis un ami de Gordon Brown.

Sarko: Il est even more washed-up que Blair.

Mandy: Ce n'est pas amusant ou clever.

Sarko: Comme vous!

Mandy: Guzzler de garlic!

Sarko: Ami de Dorothy!

(Continué page quatre-vingt quatorze)

© *Kilometres Kington*

PRINCE WILLIAM SEIZES HUGE HEADLINE

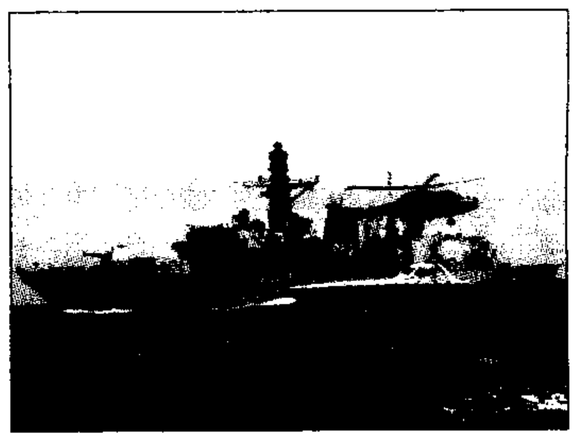
by Our Royal Staff
P.R. O'Fensive

IN AN amazing coup, the heir to the throne, Prince William, grabbed an enormous headline yesterday when he was on board a naval ship that did its job.

The Prince was serving as a lieutenant on HMS Publicity in the Caribbean when the headline appeared over the horizon. 'HERO PRINCE CHARLIE' it said and it was only a matter of time before a routine drugs bust became the most important naval encounter since the Battle of Trafalgar.

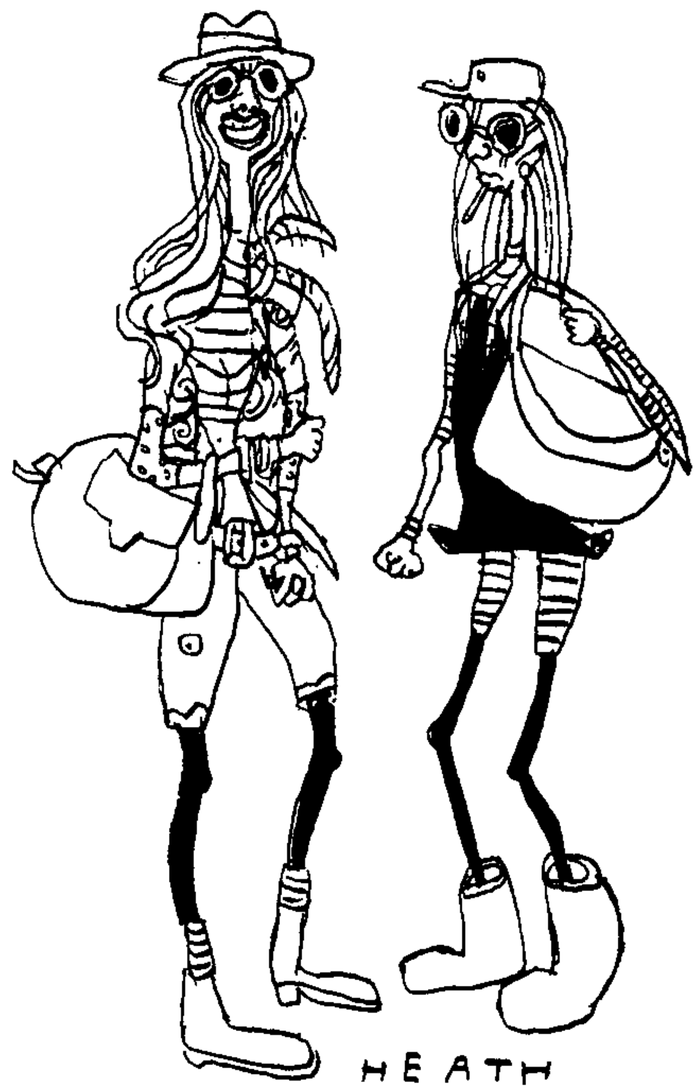
Hello Magazine Sailor

Said one expert on military strategy, "It was a classic



diversionary tactic. The day before, the Prince had been under fire over his helicopter jaunts costing thousands of pounds."

"But in one brilliant move that story was sunk and the Prince captured a headline worth an estimated £40 million!!



"Wow! You've got emphysema! That's so cool!"

VAZ DEFERENS

HOW GREEN WAS MY RALLY...

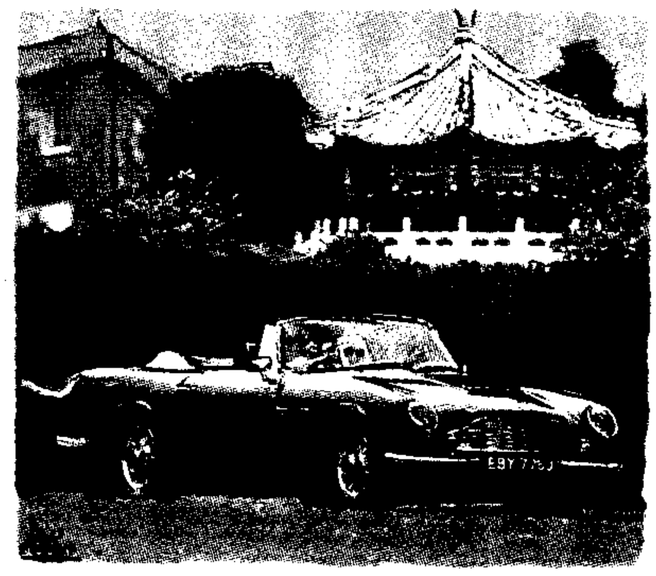
A special summer short story by Dame Sylvie Krin, author of *Heir of Sorrows, Duchess of Hearts, You're Never Too Old*

THE STORY SO FAR: Charles has decided to convert his beloved sports car to run on eco-friendly biofuel...

THERE it stood gleaming in the July rain outside the pagoda-shaped triple garage at Highgrove. And what an immaculate automobile it was, the Aston Martin Jarvis DD66, manufactured by British craftsmen in the legendary workshop of Huntley & Palmer in Solihull.

Charles looked at the car with unalloyed pride and affection and turned to his wife Camilla to explain the emotion that he felt rising in his tweed-suited breast.

"You see, it's a sort of metaphor thingie for everything I sort of stand for. It looks traditional and old-fashioned and it has all those values, but inside it's modern and green and ecological and cutting edge, d'you see?"



"That's wonderful, darling," said Camilla distractedly, as she climbed into the passenger seat to begin the long drive to their new hideaway holiday cottage in the Welsh village of Llegovery. "What exactly did you say it runs on?"

Charles laughed as he put on his seatbelt and adjusted the mirror.

"That's the best bit about it, old thing. It runs on alcohol."

"Like your granny, eh Chazza?"

Charles frowned. "No, no. I don't think that's very fair or very funny, actually."

Camilla tried to look more serious as Charles continued, "The whole point is that the car runs on wine – recycled surplus British wine. And it's incredibly kind to the environment. We'll get the whole way to Wales, leaving almost no carbon footprint and it'll cost us less than ten pence!"

Charles turned the key in the ignition and smiled.

"It's the only way!"

"IT'S the only way," said a furious Charles, as an hour later they had only reached the end of the Highgrove Drive.

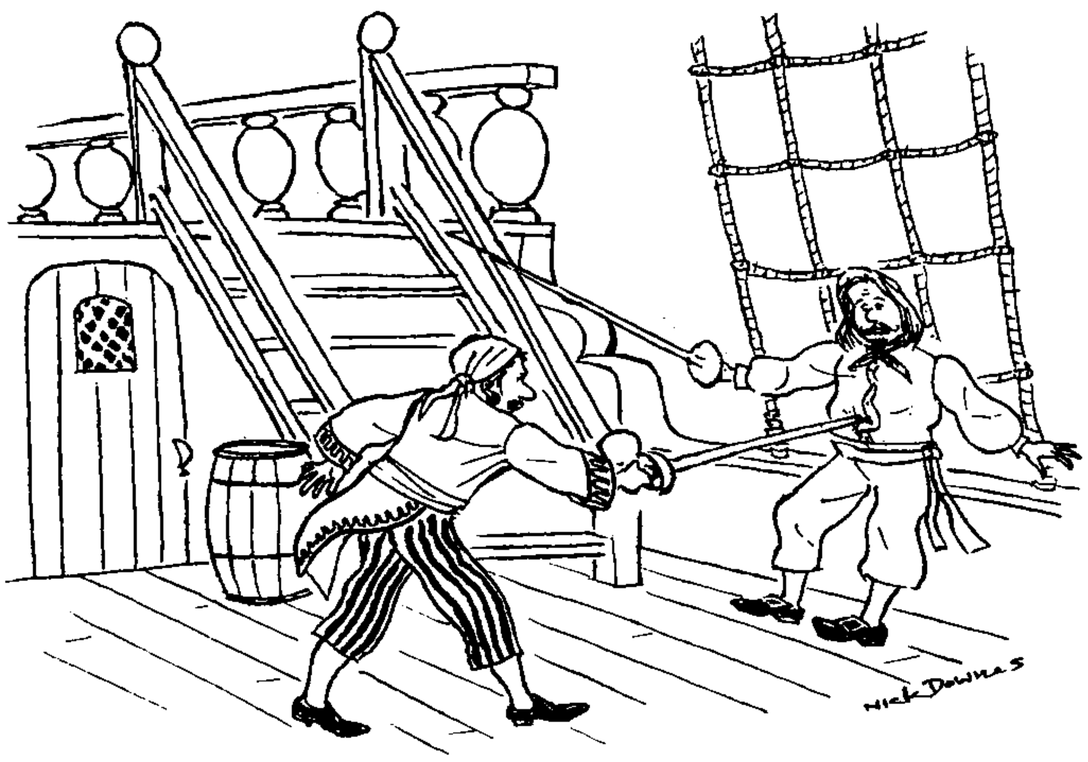
"Well, I think we should give up and go in a proper bloody car," announced Camilla, as she opened the door and prepared to abandon her husband and his treasured green vehicle.

"But we've done pretty well," said Charles.

"No, we haven't," Camilla shouted over her shoulder, as she stormed back towards the house. "We've got 200 yards and that's only because Fitztightly was pushing us."

She pointed at the exhausted, red-faced equerry collapsed at the rear of the vehicle and disappeared.

What had Charles said earlier? Something about it being a sort of metaphor thingie? "How true was that?" he wondered, as the grey clouds gathered overhead. "How very true?"



"Point taken"

WHAT YOU WILL SEE

TopGreed BBC1

Jeremy Clarkson: This week we're putting our cheques to the test. First up Hammond.

(Film of Richard Hammond driving fast into wall)

Hammond: My cheque is much smaller than Jeremy's. Why can't I have a bigger one?

Clarkson: That's because you're not nearly as good as me you useless runt. *(Audience fall about laughing)* So what about May?

(Film of James May driving slowly in traffic jam)

May: I've put my cheque through its paces and it's under-performing badly, particularly compared to Jeremy's.

Clarkson: That's because you're not nearly as good as me and you've got silly hair. *(Audience fall about laughing again)* So there you have it. My cheque is the biggest so I win as usual. 0 to a million quid in half an hour! Top that, Eco-Lesbians!!

NEXT WEEK: Jeremy drives all the way to the bank in a motorised wheelie bin full of money.

MP 'DID NOT CHEAT ON EXPENSES'

by Our Political Staff **Matthew Fraud**

A STORM erupted at Westminster yesterday when it was revealed that a backbench MP had never fiddled his expenses.

MPs of all parties expressed disbelief and dismay when they learned of the extent of their colleague's failure to use public money to feather his own nest.

What The MP Didn't Do – The Catalogue Of Shame

1. He did NOT get the taxpayer to buy a second home and then charge them again for renting it out to himself.

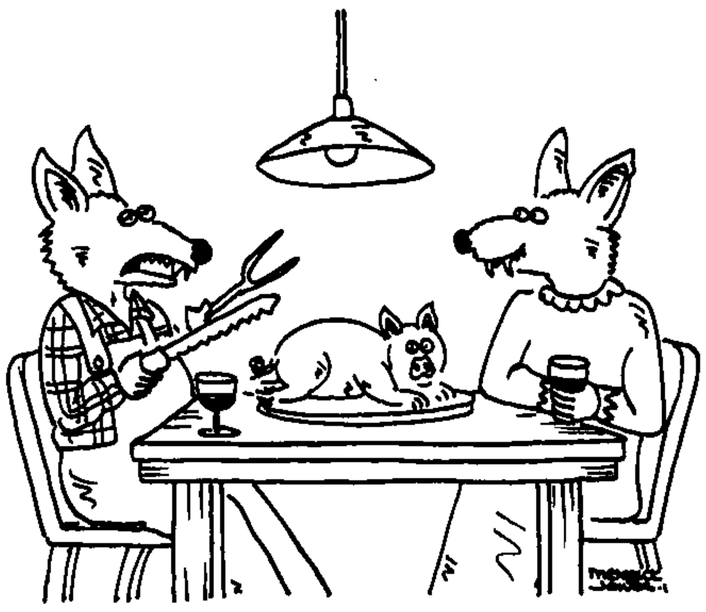
2. He did NOT employ his wife, children or any other relatives as secretaries, "research assistants" or "policy advisers".

3. He did NOT charge the taxpayer for the services of a full-time "nanny" to look after his pet dogs, Heffer and Littlejohn, whilst pretending to be his constituency secretary.

4. He did NOT get the taxpayer to pay £25,000 for taxis to take his wife on shopping trips to the local Tesco on the pretence that the expenditure was essential for entertaining visiting heads of state, e.g. President Bush, President Nelson Mandela, President Alex Salmond of the Scottish Republic.

5. His wife did not purchase the following items, viz. ● 1 tin 'Old Gorbals' Shortbread ● 1 case 'Old Macca's Lucky Heather Mills Single Malt Whisky' ('a wee dram afore ye gang tae court') ● 1 Vegetarian Haggis (made in Thailand) ● 1 six-pack of 2-litre bottles 'Dounreay Nuclear Spring Water'.

When he was exposed as being the only MP who had not fiddled his expenses, the MP offered the House his profound apologies and offered to stand down for having brought the House into disrepute.



"Maybe it was some kind of sustainable eco-house. Anyway, one puff and down it went"

Your New-Look Sunday Gnomes

We hope you like the redesigned Sunday Gnomes with its colour-coded standfirsts and its exciting new font *bora perpetua* which will be used in panels, graphics and the new review section which, with its new tinted wabs and, let's face it, no one's reading this and in all probability no one will notice or care.

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'Britain's Kids Are Too Scared To Go Out On Streets'

MALCOLM MUGGER
Daily Mail reporter

MEMBERS of Parliament were today given evidence that children in Britain today are "too frightened" to go outside their own front door in case they meet Cherie Blair.

One mother of six, Shellina Suit, told the Select Committee how her eight-year-old son Engelbert had gone out to stab his friends, but had run back into the house screaming because he had seen the former prime minister's wife.

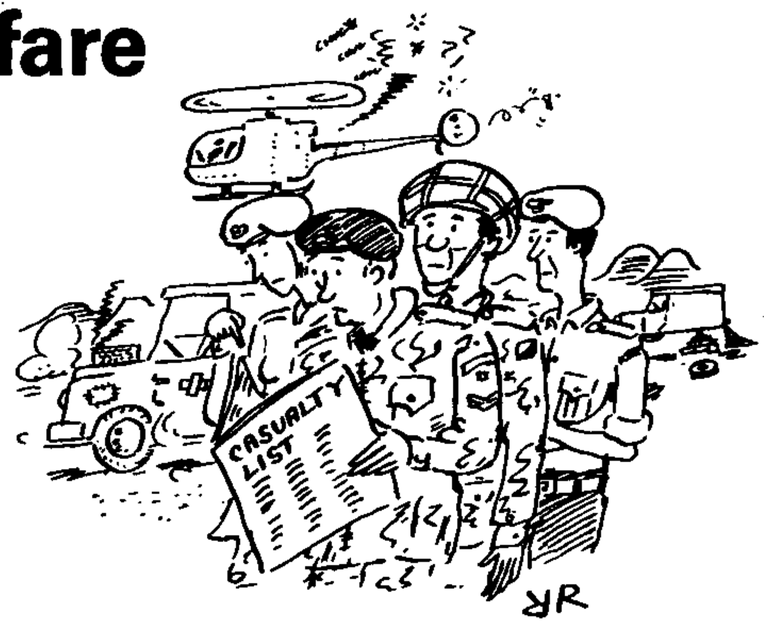
"He was totally traumatised," she said, "and he has needed round-the-clock therapy ever since. We are suing the Council."

Mrs Cherie Scare

Another witness, Professor Horace Reebok, from the Department of Media Studies at the Adidas University (formerly Cambridge) told the MPs, "Even though today's young people are familiar with shocking and disturbing images from their computer games, nothing could prepare them for the horror of seeing *(cont. p. 94)*

What they are calling "Every Mother's Worst Nightmare"

Asymmetric Warfare



Amazing Royal Treasure Hoard Goes On Sale

Those Incredible Items From The Estate Of The Late Royal Steward, William "Backstairs Billy" Tallon In Full

1. Betting slip, as used by HRH the Queen Mother, denoting a £5 wager on Fruity Boy in the 3.30pm Dubonnet Chase at Uttoxeter.
2. One signed, folded letter from HRH The Queen Mother formally requesting Mr Tallon to purchase a large bottle of Beefeaters Gin from Messrs Threshers and Co in Buckingham Palace Road "to put on one's cornflakes".
3. Souvenir Royal Ashtray, slightly cracked, bearing the legend "On the Engagement of HRH Princess Margaret to Anthony Armstrong Jones".
4. One photograph of the back of the head of a senior member of the Royal Family (possibly the Duke of Kent or possibly the Duke of Gloucester or possibly neither) taken during a picnic in the grounds of Clarence House.
5. An exquisite miniature portrait of Her Majesty The Queen in profile from 2001, labelled "First Class 27p".
6. A wastepaper basket containing the remaining items of this amazing Royal treasure trove.

The entire collection is expected to be sold for an estimated 94p.

Why I still love Glasto

by Max Hastings

SAY what you like and you probably will – I still say 'Glasto Rocks'!

All the world and his wife have been piling in this year to say that the world's greatest rock festival isn't as good as it was in the days when I first started not going there back in the Fifties (*Subs please check decade. M.H.*).

Well, I've got news for the knockers and the moaners – I didn't go this year and it's still as good as it ever was.

If there's one thing we British do well it's outdoor music in the summer.

The sight of all those attractive young people happily sitting on the grass in their black ties and evening gowns, sipping an agreeable class of Krug to accompany the plates of smoked salmon, is unforgettable.

And let's not forget the music. Where else but Glyndesbury could you hear such world-beating artists as Neil Diamond and the rapper Jay Zee singing

the greatest arias from Wolfgang Amadeus Puccini, whilst you muse happily on the enormous cheque that will shortly be arriving from the editor of the Daily Mail, or whichever newspaper it is that has asked me to write this rubbish.

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Media's golden couple to split

by Our Showbiz Staff **Dee List**

YES! The world of celebrity will never be the same again after its most glitzy couple tragically announced that they were separating!

Shocked fans wept openly in the street as the news broke and share prices tumbled overnight.

One thinks of Bogart and Bacall! Burton and Taylor! Ken and Em. But none of them had the sheer undiluted glamour of Adrian Chiles and Jane Garvey! (*Is this right? Ed.*)

♥ *HE is the nation's favourite broadcaster, the star of Match of the Day 2, The Apprentice: You're Fired and that programme that's a bit like Nationwide.*

♥ *SHE is the golden-voiced part-time presenter of Radio Four's Woman's Hour and the former doyenne of Radio Five Live's Traffic update.*

Together they were 'Media Magic' and theirs was billed as the 'Love Match Made in Broadcasting Heaven'.

But it could never last. The incredible pressures of their meteoric careers meant that their relationship would inevitably buckle under the enormous strain of their stellar careers and (*That's enough over-written rubbish. Ed*)

WAS IT THE GREATEST SPORTING EVENT EVER? by Phil Space

MAKE NO MISTAKE! As darkness fell on SW19 those of us who were privileged to be there in our living rooms knew that we had witnessed an epic struggle of heroic proportions. Nadal versus Federer 2008 – not since Achilles and Hector fought before the walls of Rome have I drunk so much *(cont. p. 94)*

Mr Andrew Murray

An Apology

IN COMMON with all other newspapers, we may in recent days have given the impression that we in some way thought that Mr Andy Murray had some chance of winning the Wimbledon men's singles tennis tournament. Headlines such as "Andy Is The New Tim – Except Better!", "Brilliant Braveheart Brit Andy Will Have Nadal For Breakfast!" and "At Last Britain's Found A Wimbo Winner In Muscles Murray!" may inadvertently have led readers to believe that we did not rule out the possibility that Mr Murray might get further than the fourth round.

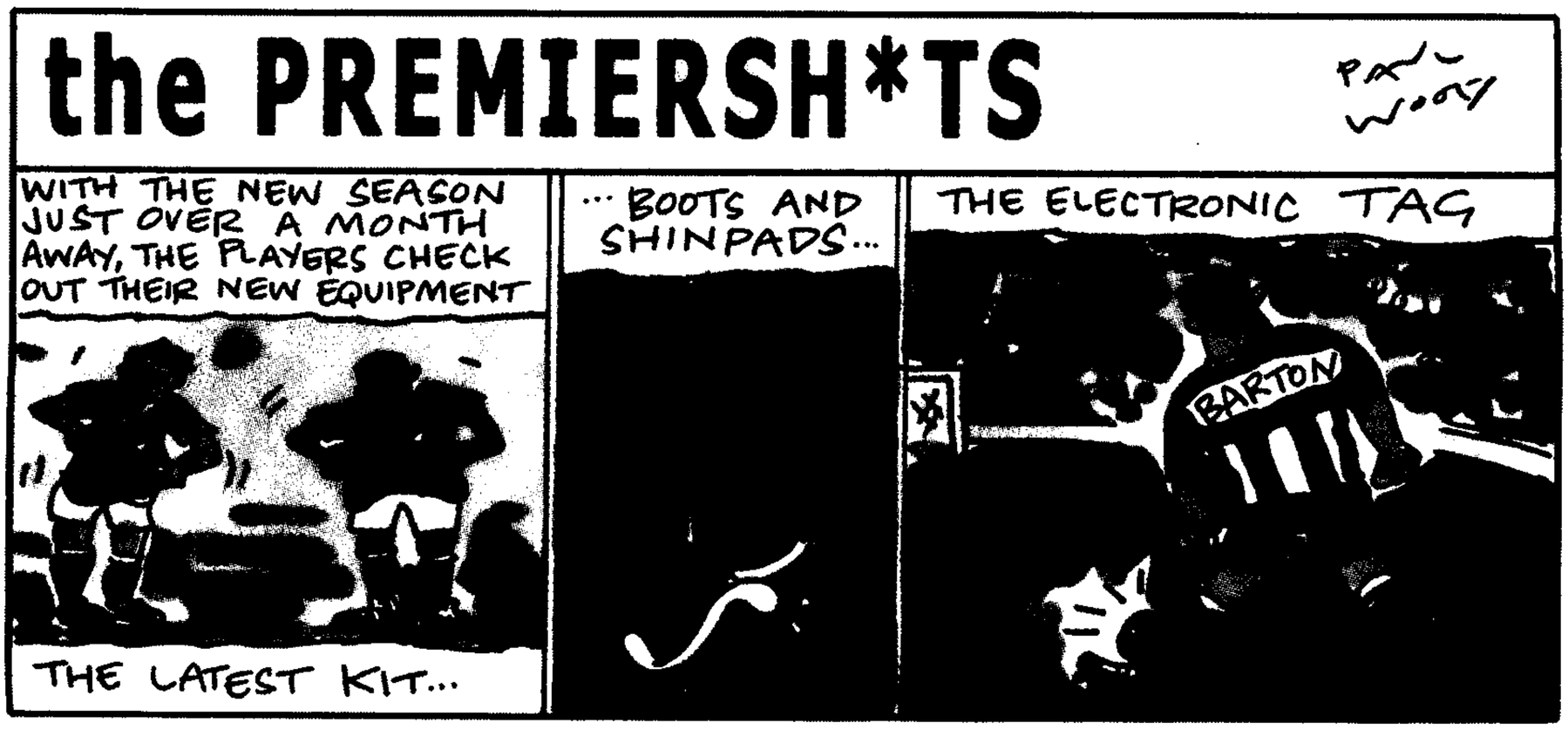
We now realise that Andy Murray is in fact useless, with a rubbish second serve that would disgrace a five-year-old in the back garden, and never stood a chance against a world-class player like Mr Rafael Nadal, who, entirely predictably, had Murray for breakfast.

We further accept that Murray is not British, as we may have suggested, but is no more than a foul-mouthed and bad-tempered Scotsman of the type who should never be allowerd south of Sauchiehall Street. We apologise for any confusion caused by our earlier reports.

NEXT YEAR: Ms Laura Robson – An Apology

MODERN INN SIGNS

the PREMIERSH*TS



DIARY

A.S. BYATT ON THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

In a curious way, Wayne Rooney has, for me at any rate, all of the grace but little of the marvellous *joie d'esprit* of, say, a Wesley Sneijder or a Nobby Stiles. But on the other hand, Rooney has something of the medieval troubadour about him, at once so joyous and so observant, yet with a strange and unexpected undertow of – what? Might one call it melancholy?

I first thought these thought-filled thoughts when thinking thoughtfully of Fernando Torres's masterful yet curiously erratic penalty against France a little less, in purely Augustinian terms, than a fortnight ago. Torres is, as his name suggests, quite extraordinarily Spanish, yet at the same time sublimely universal in his unimpeachable boldness and overt masculinity.

It was during the match against Russia that I caught a glimpse – swift yet surely undeniable – of the sunshine glinting off the hairs just below the knee on the right leg of Torres. Instantly, those peculiarly plangent lines from Abba leapt, unbeckoned, into my head:

"There was something in the air that night,
The stars were bright, Fernando
They were shining there for you and me
For liberty, Fernando"

– and I felt at once humbled yet curiously elated, as though ravaged by gypsy minstrels whilst eating handmade chocolates from my velveteen clutch-bag.

I watch football for purely aesthetic reasons, as though I were viewing a kinetic sculpture or abstract light show. The things I watch for are all contained in quadrilaterals, concern the movement of round balls, and the shifting lines of force and energy made by the players' movements.

Watching Gareth Barry pass to Dean Ashton in the mid-season friendly against Finland, I was reminded inescapably of that wonderful collage of blue and yellow sea-horses by Henri Matisse, or, perhaps more tellingly, Vermeer's truly sublime 'Young Woman Reading a Letter at an Open Window'. Is she, one wonders, truly pregnant, or is she in reality hiding a Dutch football beneath her peasant blouse?

But whereas the Young Woman holds a letter in her hands, and, moreover, reads it with intense concentration, Gareth Barry astutely avoided holding the football in his hands. He must surely have known, with all the instinct of a master craftsman, that an action such as that might trigger a sharp rebuff from the whistle of the referee. Instead, he employed his right foot to kick it, with a precision of curvature that would have been admired by Durer, to his team-mate at a position approximately North by North-East.

Watching Euro 2008 has constituted the most extraordinary pleasure, like listening to Debussy's "Prèlude à L'après-midi d'un faune" played by The Los Angeles Philharmonic on a cool August evening in a small meadow of primroses somewhere just south of Blois.

I tended to watch seated in a favourite armchair, wearing my beloved Aston Villa strip, shod in football boots autographed in his somewhat erratic italic by that most noble of English warriors, Geoff Hurst. In my left hand I clutched a can of the finest Bavarian lager, in my right a football rattle, this particular rattle holding huge personal significance, being the very same one that I clenched whilst watching Giant Haystacks take on Big Daddy in the British Heavyweight Championships at Nuneaton during my intensely pleasurable yet tragically short-lived wrestling phase back in 1978 – the year, incidentally, when Iris Murdoch carried off the Booker Prize with her quietly magisterial 'The Sea, The Sea'.

So what, then, is the – to my mind – almost mystical allure of soccer? It is at one and the same time geometry transposed into music, architecture mobilised by synchronicity, astronomy reconfigured as ballet. My edition of Chambers Dictionary defines soccer as "a short knitted covering for the foot, usually not reaching the knee", and that definition stands, as far as it goes. But to my mind it is something much more than that, something very different, something that possesses both inner and outer meanings that somehow evade definition.

I surprised myself in the Turkish-German semi-final by becoming an ardent supporter. One heard one's own voice calling, "Come on, the Turks!" Is it too fanciful to suggest that the Turks, playing so many hundreds, even thousands, of miles away, heard my plangent call on what one might justly describe as their psychic airwaves? I rather think so: no sooner had I yelled my impassioned plea than the Turks came back from defeat with a wondrous goal delivered with a post-endochromatic vibrancy of purpose worthy of a George Eliot or a Cesar Franck.

Football is, above all, a meta-text. I find one can read a game of soccer just as one would read a novel by Cervantes or Dickens, picking it up and putting it down, and placing a bookmark carefully between ball and pitch, so that one may recommence one's perusals later.

How one longs to evangelise! At a reception held at the Savoy for the England Soccer Team in February 2002, I succumbed to an overwhelming urge to tap loudly with a serving spoon on my wineglass and call for hush. Once silence had been assured, as profound and melancholy as a sunset by Caspar David Friedrich, I commenced to explain the meaning of soccer to the assembled "footballers", "managers", and "trainers".

"In a curious way" I began, "the Beautiful Game is all about putting the ball in the back of the net. But it is so much more than that. I shall never forget Gareth Southgate's dejected hunched shoulders after he missed the crucial penalty in Euro 1996. Or the wonderful image of Ballack's face when he scored his decisive free-kick against Austria, a distorted mask of focused breathing energy, like a classical sculpture of a wind god. As Wittgenstein once observed – or was it Paul Gascoigne? – football is, in an extraordinary sort of way, a game of two halves..."

I continued in this fruitful vein for a generous two hours. When, in the concluding paragraphs, I raised my eyes from my notes, I found that, moved by my stirring call to action, they had all tip-toed out of the room in order to pursue our shared love of soccer. My words had cast their wondrous spell, and, once again, football was the victor.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

Literary Review

That's Snowbiz

Snowdon: The Biography
Anne de Courcy
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20)

INTERESTING cove, Lord Snowdon. Up to a point, that is. A dab hand with the Rolleiflex (photography, that archetypal Sixties glam career); performed the notably brave act of marrying the Queen's sister; finessed an entrée into the showbiz end of Wilson-era bohemia (Peter Sellers, Britt Ekland, etc); shagged anything that happened to be available…

All this might just have made a decent colour supplement feature, with pix from the old boy's collection. But 400 pages of Lord Snowdon? 150,000 words worth of Lord Snowdon? Numberless photographs of Lord Snowdon alongside the Hon. Bunty Gravetye-Fyffishcake or whoever the latest up-market squeeze happens to be? I think not.

Given the singular unattractiveness of large parts of the *dramatis personae*, the lashings of snob appeal that invariably accompany publishing projects of this kind, and its author's extreme reluctance to bother with anything much beyond surface sheen, *Snowdon: The Biography* is, inevitably, forced to get by on accumulations of rococo detail. These reach a symbolic height in the footnote on page 94 adumbrating the complex destiny of the wedding cake: "Later, slices of this cake and several others were distributed to the staffs of the various royal palaces, the officers and crew of the royal yacht, the regiments of which the Princess was Colonel-in-Chief… In all, 1,089 pounds of cake, approximating at two ounces per person, were sent out." But there is some ripe amusement to be gained from the picture captions, in particular a twenty-ninth birthday shot of Mags in which "Bob Belton, acting as photographer's assistant, had wound an elastic band around the far side of the pearls to shorten them into a choker".

And on we sashay, through the party-going Sixties, the fissiparous Seventies, the career-reconfiguring Eighties, along with Nicky and Edna and Angie and Julie and Jackie, the problem, alas, being that the most absorbing character in this riot of gush is actually Princess Margaret: annoying the Queen Mother by opening the door when she wanted it shut; stealing her centenarian parent's wheelchair, getting automatically blamed by the royal family for the break-up of her marriage on the grounds that everyone knew how awful she was. All this, it scarcely needs saying, has been serialised by the *Daily Mail* and solemnly reviewed in practically every broadsheet newspaper in England.

Kathryn Hughes, no mean biographer herself, writing at length in last week's *Guardian*, would have us believe the form itself is in "crisis": too much celebrity tat; publishers not interested; too many sub-Amanda Foremans (apparently Foreman's biography of *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* started the slide: an argument rehashed all over last weekend's "new-look" *Sunday Times*); Jordan selling 300,000 copies and Hilary Spurling's life of Matisse selling 12,000.

Even with the grim evidence of a work like *Snowdon: The Biography* before us, this anxiety seems slightly misplaced. As with every other genre, the modes of biography change over time. The Victorians wanted their subjects embalmed in capacious multi-volume tombs. The inter-war era inclined to Strachey-esque acidity. Now, like every other contemporary art-form, "life-writing", as the professionals call it, is simply a part of showbiz. The biographer's job, consequently, is to go with the flow while finding ways to subvert it.

In this context, Anne de Courcy's musings on Lord Snowdon are such a pattern example of naff minor royal hagiography that you wonder whether, almost by accident, she hasn't stumbled on a new direction for the form – the pastiche life in which all the elements we expect – snobbery, glitter, moral haze – are heightened to the point of thrilling absurdity. Who knows? The literary historians of 2050 may well end up saluting Miss De Courcy as a pioneer of her craft.

Rory McGrath

Blog standard

Cityboy: Beer and Loathing in the Square Mile
Geraint Anderson
(Headline, £17.99)

IF WE are all going to suffer during the forthcoming recession, or depression, or whatever you want to call it, it's nice to think that the Cityboys will suffer more than anyone.

Obviously they won't suffer unduly – they have their money, and they are keeping it – but the mere idea of merchant bankers and stockbrokers leaping out of skyscraper windows (or more likely, pushing each other out) will warm a few hearts during the cold winter to come.

Let's not forget: it's all their fault. More so even than estate agents and Piers Morgan, the Cityboys have come to personify the shallowness, greed, arrogance and short-term thinking of the age. And just in case we had somehow failed to spot that, along comes Geraint Anderson's *Cityboy* to really rub it in.

Cityboy started as an anonymous weekly column in *thelondonpaper*, a sort of pretend blog that sought to reveal to us innocents the dreadful things people said and did in the City. Like anything that looks a bit like a blog, its author was swiftly signed up to produce a hardback book for tons of money, and Geraint Anderson is now revealed in full goateed glory to be a real human being with a 2:1 in history from Cambridge.

After years of hippy activism and random hedonism in eastern parts, he cut off his ponytail, removed his earrings, put on a cheap suit and blagged himself a job in a bank. This then is a mildly fictionalised version of his experiences, which is to say that the lead character here is called "Steve Jones" and all other names have been changed, presumably at the behest of Headline's lawyers.

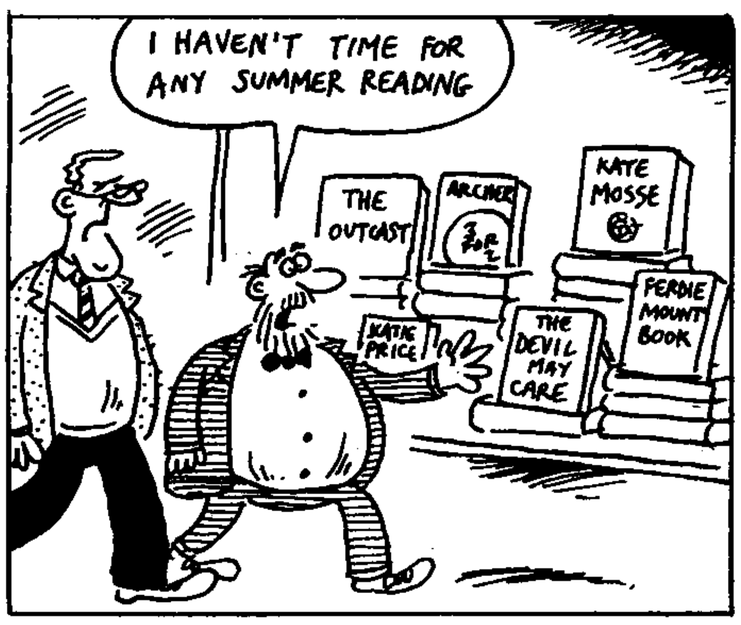
This immediately gets you wondering: did these things happen, or did he make them up? Are we reading the savage exposé advertised on the cover, or a comic novel full of old jokes and weary stereotypes? It's hard to say, but what does become clear is that Anderson has read Martin Amis. Unfortunately he doesn't seem to have Amis's talent.

"There was something in his confident tone that couldn't just be explained by his hooter being filled with enough bugle to keep the Colombian army marching for two weeks." Anderson's favourite words include "bugle", "pints", "pies", "fast buck", "loser" and "autopilot oblivion". In his years in the City, which he claims to have hated, he lived life "to the max", a sort of responsibility-free, infinitely extended adolescence with unlimited funds and the self-awareness of a traffic light.

There's nothing remotely satirical about any of it, of course. It's purely celebratory. He's not just having his cake and eating it. He's having every cake he can get his hands on, eating them all, throwing up and eating some more, all washed down with vintage champagne in the back of a mini-cab at four o'clock in the morning.

All of which quickly becomes very dull indeed. Anderson's similes are predictable, the jokes are old (he lifts a notorious and widely circulated cricketing sledge and deposits it in the mouth of one of his characters, as though it's an original thought), and he is obsessed with male genitalia. The Essex boy market traders may not have been to university, but "you needed balls like watermelons to take them on in a verbal joust". Everyone is a "dick-splash" or has a very small penis. He claims to despise the aggressive macho culture in the City, but his book is steeped in it. It's impossible to imagine anyone getting any pleasure out of it other the people it pretends to satirise.

Maybe it was foolish to expect any more. *Cityboy* might not have been a real blog, but this book does demonstrate many of the weaknesses of the form: arrogance, carelessness and, above all, a terrible poverty of imagination. Perhaps he was better suited to life in the City than he thought.



BOOKS & BOOKMEN

FIRST DAZE OF THE RAJ

■ IN HIS recent hearing before the General Medical Council, our old friend Dr Raj Persaud denied that he made a habit of stealing other people's work.

The plagiarism in a book he published in 2003 was a momentary lapse, "a cutting and pasting error". Another instance of literary larceny, in a piece for the Times Educational Supplement in 2005, was blamed on the paper's sub-editors. But Lord Gnome has now found further evidence that Dr Raj was pilfering shamelessly almost from the start of his media career.

The paperback of Sheron Boyle's book Working Girls and Their Men, based on extensive interviews with prostitutes and their clients, appeared in February 1995. "Many prostitutes say clients deliberately go for women who are total opposites from their partners at home," Boyle revealed. "Compare the scrawny, lank-haired, badly-dressed prostitute Sir Allan [Green] was seen with, to his elegant blonde Swedish wife, Eva, who tragically killed herself several months after the incident was revealed."

Four months later, on 29 June 1995, the Daily Mail asked a "top psychiatrist" to explain why Hugh Grant would pay Divine Brown for sex while going out with gorgeous pouting Liz Hurley. "Prostitutes report that clients often prefer women who are direct opposites from their partners at home," wrote Dr Raj (for it was he). Oddly enough, he too then recalled the case of former DPP Sir Allan Green: "It is interesting to compare the shabby, dark-haired prostitute Sir Allan was seen with, to his elegant, blonde Swedish wife Eva, who tragically killed herself a few months after the incident was revealed."

And so it went on, with many phrases, observations and statistics lifted wholesale from Sheron Boyle's book without attribution. Alas, she never complained to the *Mail*, and Persaud was able to pursue his lucrative light-fingered activities for more than a decade before finally having his collar felt.

■ HOW can old-fashioned patrician authors compete in a book-trade dominated by celebs such as Katie Price? The answer is simple: pull rank, especially now that David Cameron and Boris Johnson have made it OK to be posh.

Hence the advance press release promoting James Buchan's new novel *The Gate of Air*, due out in September from Maclehose Press, the latest imprint of veteran publishing gent Christopher Maclehose. Buchan may be a well-regarded writer of both novels and non-fiction, and a former Whitbread winner, but what use is that in PR terms?

"James Buchan was educated at Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford," the publicity handout purrs. "He is married to Lady Evelyn Rose Phipps, daughter of Oswald Phipps, 4th Marquess of Normanby..." Beat that, Jordan!

■ JUST one month to go until *Not in My Name*, the "compendium of modern hypocrisy" penned by Julie Burchill and her new best friend Chas Newkey-Burden, is released by Virgin Books, to no doubt glittering reviews.

One critic who is bound to enjoy the efforts of the gruesome twosome is the Amazon.co.uk user who styles himself "read all about it". His enthusiasm for la Burchill's last book *Made in Brighton* ("exciting and thrilling and over far too quickly... a champagne menu of a book which you must buy!") is surpassed only by his fervent admiration for Newkey-Burden's *Amy Winehouse: The Biography* ("absolutely engrossing to read... Highly recommended"), Newkey-Burden's *Paris Hilton: Life on the Edge* ("full of surprises and revelations... brilliantly told"), Newkey-Burden's *Great Email Disasters* ("laugh a minute stuff – these are the most tragic, gripping and hilarious tales I've read for many, many years"), Newkey-Burden's *Reduced History of Britain* ("funny and informative") and Newkey-Burden's *Reduced History of Dogs* ("an absolute gem of a book... had me in stitches").

But what is this? Check the profile for "read all about it" on the book site and his "Wish List" reveals that his real name appears to be... Chas Newkey-Burden!

■ WHEN the St Stephen the Great Charitable Trust (SSG) took over the SPCK bookshops in 2006, it declared the move to be "good news for the whole Christian community" In fact it has been a disaster.

Mark and Philip Brewer, Eastern Orthodox Christians from Texas, bought the Christian bookshop chain from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for a nominal sum, as the shops were making heavy losses and likely to close down. Staff and regular customers were irritated when non-Christian texts such as the Qur'an, often useful to clergy or Christians doing interfaith study, were quickly removed from the shelves.

Worse was to come, however, in the way the Brewers treated the booksellers.

Shopworkers' union Usdaw submitted 15 employment tribunal claims last month and says there will be more. Some of the staff, including those at bookshops in Lincoln and Chester, were dismissed by email and told that redundancy payments would only be available through the bankruptcy courts. The new owners had already tried to impose longer working hours for no extra pay and to take away rights to company sick pay.

SSG has filed for bankruptcy in the US and no wages have been paid for June. One woman who was dismissed while on maternity leave, and thus must be paid for all 39 weeks under UK law, was told to contact the US bankruptcy court about her pay. Usdaw says that shouldn't allow SSG to weasel out of paying damages to its former staff, since the bookshops are set up as a UK company with UK-based assets.

For the former shop manager in Worcester, however, any redress will now be sadly too late. Steve Jeynes was found dead, in an apparent suicide, two weeks after being made redundant.

'Bookworm'

LIBRARY NEWS

■ ONCE known simply as Margate Library, Kent's new "Thanet Gateway Plus" is off to a disastrous start, with an official head count revealing a 42 percent drop in visitors.

A book-lined one-stop shop for council services was supposed to create a more welcoming environment for people queuing for help with housing or complaints about rubbish collection. However, the idea of sharing their former quiet study space hasn't exactly been a hit with regular library users.

Kent county council told local paper *Your Thanet* that it would be investigating the drop and sending a mailshot to library members but later backtracked, saying the figures appeared to be inaccurate. Councillor David Green, who is opposing plans for a similar scheme in Ramsgate, described the situation at Margate as "a disaster".

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

FOR all those manly baritones and basses who spend their lives trying to prove that opera is the stuff of red-hot heterosexual passion its plots pretend (and not the orgy of high-camp it might appear) the past few weeks have been challenging.

Not only did Robert Carsen's outrageously queeny staging of *Candide* open at ENO, with much pursing of lips and mincing of minor roles; but New York City Opera's incoming general manager Gerard Mortier (known in US theatre circles as Monsieur Krankypants) announced his first commission for when he takes over in 2009: *Brokeback Mountain*, the opera.

Given the opportunities for cowboy choruses, rodeo dance numbers and (always good box-office) a spot of nudity, a *Brokeback Mountain* opera was probably something that had to happen sooner or later. And in a sense it already has.

Last year in Munich an innovative production of *Eugene Onegin* relocated the action from Tsarist Russia to somewhere south of Kansas in the 1960s, and came up with an answer to the question neither Tchaikovsky nor Pushkin ever quite resolved: why does Onegin the baritone turn down Tatyana the soprano so abruptly?

The answer (why didn't we think of it before?) is that Onegin actually fancies Lensky the tenor. The only problem is that neither Onegin nor Lensky have quite come out, so it's all bit awkward – hence the duel scene where they shoot each other. In the end, though, everybody turns out gay (including Prince Gremin) which makes for jolly dance numbers where Tchaikovsky's polonaises and mazurkas are performed by bare-chested men in leather chaps and stetsons.

The opera world is now holding its breath to know which of its current hearthrobs Mortier will cast as his cowboy leads. Rolando Villazon or Jonas Kauffman bedding down with Simon Keenlyside would be obvious favourites, except that by 2013, when the new opera premieres, they might have gone to seed and lost their pecs. More likely M. Krankypants will go for younger stock. And he'll certainly enjoy the auditions...

"And now, a concerto for violin, sweet wrappers, coughs, mobile ringtones, watch alarms, air conditioning, police sirens and jet reverberations"

TURBULENT times, meanwhile, for poor Rolando Villazon. Having taken six months out to deal with some kind of breakdown, the star tenor's much-heralded return to Covent Garden in last month's *Don Carlo* wasn't the glorious event everyone expected. And hardly surprising, given the upheaval we now know was going on in the background.

Just as Villazon was preparing for *Don Carlo*, his agent dramatically went AWOL from the powerful international management company IMG – only to resurface with equal drama at Universal, the record company that now seems to be diversifying into management as well. Nor was this agent empty-handed. He arrived at Universal with another emigré from IMG and the business of some of IMG's most illustrious clients – including Anna Netrebko, Thomas Hampson and Rolando Villazon who thereby passed, like so much property, from one company to another.

IMG, unsurprisingly, was very slightly livid and instantly launched legal actions against Universal for conspiracy and "theft" – the "theft" being of Villazon et al. It's all become extremely unpleasant. How Villazon is coping given his own recent history one can only guess.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Pseuds Corner

Best present given That's hard to answer. Whenever my children are being demanding or whining about something they want that they've seen advertised on the television, I tell them 'But I gave you the gift of life.'

ISABEL FONSECA,
Telegraph Magazine

The determination to put the Rooney-McLoughlins in their place recalls the moment in [E.M.] Forster's A Passage to India when the two missionaries are debating whether God's heaven will admit monkeys.

MARINA HYDE, *Guardian*

When the Smiths emerged like a strangely attractive housefly over the sugar-coated rim of the musical cocktail that was the early 1980s – Adam Ant, Haircut 100 and Duran Duran were the primary flavours – I took to them with the enthusiasm of Christ for his cross.

TIM LOTT, foreword to 'Great Lyricists: Morrissey' booklet, given away with the *Guardian*

A human being so lovely and bright that, in a troubled world, merely uttering his name feels like saying a prayer.

CAITLIN MORAN on Hugh Laurie, *The Times*

On being a model When I was having my hair and make-up done backstage at a fashion show, I would sneak in a copy of Dostoevsky and read it inside a copy of Elle or Vogue. But it would be pretentious of me to say I was more intelligent than the other supermodels.

CARLA BRUNI-SARKOZY,
Independent on Sunday

The Pop Group confronted Armageddon directly. It was their apocalypticism that stopped them from being merely the earnest pamphleteers they were painted as. The group's rhythm section had tightened on *For How Much Longer,* as if the tension of the global situation – the USSR had invaded Afghanistan, the Iranian revolution had just happened – had tautened the music itself.

MARK FISHER,
The Wire

I was at a party in Paris in a beautiful garden. It was 1973, and I had just launched my first collection. Loulou de la Falaise was wearing a pair of my satin shoes with big buckles. He called her over, very excited. 'Loulou! Luly!' he said. 'This is the most perfect shoe I have ever seen.' It was a huge compliment. I was moved to tears, as this was coming from the god, from the master *[continues]*

MANOLO BLAHNIK remembers Yves Saint Laurent, *Sunday Times Style Section*

CONTRIBUTORS: Alan Diment, Lewis Hill, Andrew Mitchell, Angela Partington, Gillian Harrison, James Butler, Simon Lee.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

THIRD WORLD AID

The dash for cash

THE sale by government-owned international development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, of $1bn worth of power generation investments last year might have made tens of millions in "carried interest", aka profit shares, for the bosses at its privatised fund manager Actis (*Eyes passim*). But it didn't do much for Labour's development figures.

The "disinvestment" was a significant cause of a dip in "overseas development assistance" to just 0.36 percent of gross domestic product, against a target of 0.5 percent by 2010 and 0.7 percent by 2013.

More importantly, the figures demonstrate how the government's crucial development target is blind to the nature of the "development assistance". This term is more commonly associated with famine relief and poverty reduction, but it also covers CDC's increasingly commercial investments: a pound put into one of the fund's newer types of investment such as shopping malls scores as well as a third world health programme. So when the millions realised by the Globeleq energy group are re-invested in yet another juicy business with dubious development value, the blip will be reversed.

Small wonder the department for international development (DfID) is happy to see CDC move out of businesses with real development impact but little profit, such as agriculture, and into money-spinning lines that private sector funds would happily finance like mobile phones. The more profit, the more can be put into other lucrative businesses and the greater the chance of hitting the "development" targets.

Haven help us

ONE of the most damaging consequences of CDC's dash for cash is the fund's extensive tax avoidance using its 33 tax haven companies, into which the *Eye* has spent months trying to shine some light.

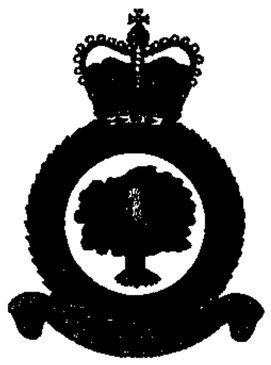
CDC won't let the *Eye* or anyone else see the accounts of its most important subsidiary companies which actually run the businesses it owns and which would allow the question of tax avoidance to be analysed; but it has admitted that in 2007 they made just £11.3m, on which they set aside £5.2m for tax, out of a total return for CDC of more than £600m. Even ignoring enormous gains from selling and re-valuing investments, the £11.3m still represents a small proportion of the money the businesses really make.

The companies' profits are reduced from what the *Eye's* analysis suggests is between £50m and £100m by the payment of interest to CDC or their tax haven holding companies, all but wiping out their taxable profits. Once again, however, CDC refused to comment on its use of a ruse that was made possible under 1999 legislation exempting CDC from UK tax and from laws preventing UK-owned multinationals stashing their profits in tax haven companies.

● *BBC Radio 4's investigative programme* File on 4 *will be covering the CDC/Actis story on Tuesday 15 July at 8pm.*

DEFENCE

Top brassed off



TOP military brass are starting to voice their own reservations over privatising military training under an £11bn PFI deal (*Eyes passim*).

The man in charge of support for RAF staff, Air Vice-Marshal Nick Kurth, last month visited the well-regarded Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering at Cosford, Shropshire. Its crucial work providing engineers to maintain the air force's planes will shortly be "outsourced" to PFI consortium Metrix and transferred to a new "defence academy" at St Athan in South Wales.

"I was very impressed by the training facilities that are available at Cosford," wrote Kurth after his visit, "with a good mix of traditional hands-on work, for which there is ultimately no substitute, to the use of relatively high-end, computer-based simulation where appropriate and I question what further level of innovation that Metrix are going to bring to our extant training regime."

His worries echo concerns that Metrix (comprising Qinetiq, EDS, Land Securities, Raytheon and others) will rely heavily on cheaper computer simulation within its academy to train engineers, in place of the practice on real military kit that would prove infinitely more useful on the frontline.

Shoe-horning thousands of trainees into a single academy away from bases where training has traditionally been performed presents other problems, too, not least the erosion of the forces' "military ethos" that is built in large part through an understanding of their histories.

This goes out of the window for personnel training in, for example, the Royal Signals Corps, whose museum remains in Blandford, Dorset, while they learn their craft in the redundant aircraft hangar-turned-defence academy in South Wales.

The MoD and its consultants have spent hours scratching their heads over this one to produce a solution. Hundreds of years' of military history will now be replaced with a special "ethos room". That should do the trick!

EDS we lose

ANOTHER government IT contract, another EDS disaster: this time the deal to bring together all the MoD and forces' computer systems, handed to the "Atlas" consortium led by EDS with Fujitsu, EADS, General Dynamics and Logica (see *Eyes passim*).

Four years in, reports the National Audit Office, key systems are 18 months late and the contract is £182m over budget, largely because ATLAS hasn't developed the software it should have and the MoD didn't perform such basic checks as whether the sites due to get new computer terminals had any power.

When the MoD's own costs are added, the total cost is estimated at £7.1bn (seven years in Iraq or four aircraft carriers). This includes a whopping £1bn extra bill (enough, say, to replace all the defective armoured vehicles in Iraq several times over) for "necessary work to better clarify [the MoD's] requirements... at defence sites not yet on contract". Which is completely different to a cost overrun, of course.

RESTRAINT DEATH

Pinning down the truth

IT WAS only thanks to a mortuary assistant that the parents of Kurt Howard learnt how their son had died in the psychiatric unit of Cefn Coed hospital (pictured) in Swansea. Concerned about the number of bruises on his body, including an obvious black eye, the assistant alerted the local coroner.

It transpired that Kurt, a young man with a history of mental illness and drug abuse, had died while being restrained face down for a prolonged period by four staff. This was not initially disclosed by the hospital to either the pathologist or the coroner, who believed they were dealing with a death by natural causes.

Until his parents received a call three days after the death from a detective from South Wales police, who in turn had been alerted by the coroner, Kurt's family had been led to believe that the 32-year-old had died from a sudden heart attack.

In the meantime, and contrary to advice from a senior staff member at the hospital at the time of death that the ward should be treated as a crime scene, Kurt's room had been stripped bare and staff had disposed of his clothes and possessions.

After two separate police investigations, the crown prosecution service (CPS) decided there was insufficient evidence to bring charges against anyone. Last week, however, an inquest jury said Kurt's sudden death was the result of "excessive, prolonged physical restraint, face down on the floor in a confined environment". Jurors condemned inadequate staff training, poor facilities and delays in summoning a doctor and the emergency services. The jury had been told that when Kurt had begun shouting and become aggressive, staff should have retreated and diffused the situation and not entered the confines of his tiny room.

Kurt had suffered from a personality disorder and psychosis triggered by drug abuse, and had been in and out of psychiatric units for 15 years.

In 2002, he had gone voluntarily to the hospital's psychiatric unit on bail for public order offences.

On the morning of 29 June, he was said to have become violent after being prevented from smoking in his room, and required restraint. According to staff he was held down for prolonged periods on two separate occasions. But the inquest jury was given widely conflicting accounts of how long he was held down, who was involved and even what position he was held in. Two nurses changed their accounts of when the second restraint was said to have started, from 7.45am to 8.30am. What is clear, however, is that his confrontation with staff began at around 7.30am and he was dead by 9.25.

The nurses all gave evidence to say Kurt had become aggressive when they entered his room and had tried to punch one of them. He had been kicking and spitting and continually trying to hit out, they said, but none had suffered any injury.

The *Eye* asked the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust, which now runs Cefn Coed, why the family and coroner had not originally been told that Kurt had died while being restrained. In a statement the trust said it "acknowledged that procedures around reporting unexpected deaths to police were not robust enough" six years ago.

Robert Yorke, Kurt's stepfather, is writing to the CPS to ask it to reconsider its decision to take no action in the light of both the evidence which emerged during the inquest and the jury's findings. At the time the staff involved were temporarily suspended but then reinstated.

"It is quite clear that, but for the mortuary assistant and pathologist, we may never have known what went on in that hospital," Mr Yorke told the *Eye*. "It has been a painful unrelenting battle for six years to try and get to the truth... Yet even now I do not believe we have heard the whole truth, and I am not sure now that we ever will."

PRIVATE PRISONS

Getting away with murder

INQUEST lawyers representing the family of an inmate stabbed to death in Rye Hill prison (pictured) have demanded that the government rewrite its contracts for the country's 11 private prisons.

The contracts contain a perverse penalty points system which means the private contractor could be financially penalised if weapons and other prohibited items are found in the jail. In other words, it is a built-in incentive not to find any.

Details of the contracts emerged during the inquest into the 2005 death of 44-year-old Wayne Reid, stabbed to death in his cell in the Warwickshire jail, run by Global Solutions Ltd (GSL). Three men are serving jail sentences in connection with the murder.

An inquest jury concluded that the 600-place prison was "unsafe and unstable" and that this had contributed to Reid's death.

In a damning indictment, the jury concluded that weapons could easily be smuggled in because security searches on staff were inadequate. It also said there was a complete failure to search cells properly.

The jury had been told that logs of cell searches on the wing appeared to have been made up. An audit showed the same prison officers searching different cells at the same time. Contrary to what would normally be expected in a jail, "nil" was usually recorded against any finds.

The jury concluded that the prison authorities ought to have known that Mr Reid, who had a history of trouble with other inmates, "was under a real and immediate risk of harm".

A report by the chief inspector of prisons at the time also found Rye Hill to be a dangerous place. At times only two prison officers were responsible for 70 inmates.

Inspectors were shown mobile phones and told that drugs, alcohol and knives were freely available. Prisoners "sorted out" fights and bullying themselves, and the inspectors said they witnessed "evidence of staff being bullied by prisoners and withdrawing from rather than confronting intimidatory and aggressive behaviour".

While recent reports suggest an improvement, an investigation by *Panorama* last year found inmates were still intimidating staff and still had access to drugs and phones. An undercover reporter working as a prison officer was offered £1,500 to smuggle in drugs.

Reid's murder, just five days before he was due to be released, was allowed to happen because the jail was out of control. But lawyers have also questioned whether the government's system which penalises jails more heavily for discovering "serious items" smuggled in than it does for serious assaults was also a factor. The discovery of "serious items" such as weapons attracts 50 penalty points, while a serious assault on staff or inmates only merits 10 – and, in what looks like an indication of prison authority values, prison suicides and self-harm – of major concern to prison reformers – attract only one penalty point.

Nogah Ofer, the solicitor for Reid's family, has written to the coroner urging him to recommend to the government that it change the penalty points system. "It became clear at the inquest that there was no proper random cell searching procedures in place, which makes you wonder whether this was not a priority for management," she said. "It meant that knives were available, so that what could have led to a black eye resulted in a fatal injury."

REVENUE & CUSTOMS

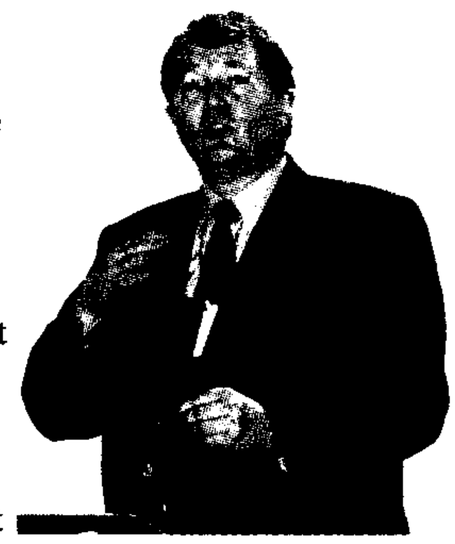
Back on Terra Firma

ALTHOUGH Paul Gray, chair of Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs when the child benefit discs were lost last year, took the rap for the fiasco, the recent independent report put the blame squarely on the disastrous reorganisation of the department under his predecessor, captain of industry Sir David Varney. His appointment of course was the bright idea of one Gordon Brown.

As the *Eye* pointed out in 2006 (see *Eye* 1152), when Varney wanted to merge Inland Revenue and Customs, he did what generations of bungling bosses have done before him and gave the job of designing the new department to consultants, in this case at McKinsey. In reviewer Kieron Poynter's words, they produced a "so-called 'constructive friction' matrix type organisation". This, he concluded two and a half years after the *Eye*, was "not suited" to the business.

Nor was Poynter impressed that "HMRC continues to operate processes that hark back to a paper-based, rather than a digital world". Appropriate then that, having left HMRC in such a mess, Varney should have been hand-picked by Brown to advise on "transformational government"!

As for Poynter, chairman of PwC, he did what he had to do to protect his firm's hundreds of millions in annual government consultancy income. Sparing the prime minister's blushes, he gratuitously declared: "The decision to merge the Revenue and [Customs] was the right one." And he studiously avoided any mention of the data security specialists axed from the Washington child benefit offices from which the discs went missing as part of Gordon's "efficiency" drive (see *Eye* 1204).



The appointment the day before Poynter's report of another captain of industry, Mike Clasper (picture), as HMRC's new chairman raised a few eyebrows, meanwhile.

At least the taxmen aren't complete strangers to the "operational managing director" of private equity outfit Terra Firma. His firm's funds, including one that owns Britain's military housing through Annington Homes, are tax-efficiently run from Guernsey, with just an advisory business, Terra Firma Capital Partners Ltd, making a derisory (in private equity terms) couple of million in profits in London.

Even the UK company is owned by Guy Hands through a Cayman Islands company called London 58 Ltd.

The arrangements that Terra Firma uses to keep most of its profits offshore recently attracted the attention of the Revenue's Special Civil Investigations branch. Inquiries are rumbling on as investigators don't agree that the firm's offshore arrangements are as effective in reducing the private equity tax dodgers' bills as they had hoped.

In the Back continues overleaf ➤

NHS HEALTH CHECK

MEDICINE BALLS

Darzi's Déjà-Vu Review

WILL Lord Darzi (pictured) be following Raj Persaud to the GMC on charges of plagiarism? His NHS review, *High Quality Care For All* (30 June 2008) is alarmingly similar to Frank Dobson's 1998 bestseller *A First Class Service – Quality in the new NHS*.

Dobson's foreword starts: "All patients in the National Health Service are entitled to high quality care" and promises that "unacceptable variations that have grown up in recent years must end." Just ten years later, Darzi stresses that tackling significant variations in the quality of care will be his first priority.

Dobson's reforms would ensure "high quality care becomes the norm everywhere". Darzi, by contrast, will deliver "high quality for users of services in all aspects, not just some". Dobson managed 191 mentions of "quality" in his document compared to Darzi's 359. But Dobson put quality in every chapter heading (Setting Quality Standards, Delivering Quality Standards, Monitoring Quality Standards and Action for Quality.) So the claim that the Darzi review is radically different for its focus on quality is clearly bollocks.

Dobson put his paper out for consultation but Darzi has already consulted more than 2,000 doctors and the fact that so many put variation in quality at the top of their agenda a decade after Labour promised to abolish it is frankly disturbing. In his preface, Prime Minister Gordon Brown desperately tries to rewrite history by claiming that the first 10 years of "new" Labour were all about building capacity to get waiting lists down, and now it's time to focus on, er, quality. Perhaps he was sulking when Dobson tried just that.

There are lots of other similarities – promises to put patients at the centre of care, gather their opinions and give them outcome figures – but two key differences. Dobson's log made not a single mention of the word "choice". Darzi gives us 62 to choose from.

Dobson is "old" Labour, believes in cooperation in healthcare (along with the Scottish and Welsh assemblies) and that people don't want to shop around for treatment when they're ill. Blair quickly got rid of him and brought in Alan Milburn to feed the NHS to the market. Lots of money, duplication and job insecurity has indeed got waiting lists down; but because the publication of clinical outcomes promised by Dobson and Milburn has never materialised, we still don't know if the onslaught on waiting lists will come at a price of failed cataracts and joint replacements later on. Quicker does not always mean better.

Dobson also believed that the healthy competition of professionalism would raise standards but Darzi has swallowed the Blair belief that staff need financial incentives to practise good care. So as well as reminding them to treat patients with dignity and respect (doh!), they will be paid extra for providing a "new" quality service based on outcomes. Could this be an extension of the quality and outcomes framework that "incentivised" GPs so well? Incentives work by undermining the neutrality of professional judgement and encouraging self-interested decision making. They wouldn't be needed if good information on outcomes was published.

So, has the fag end of "new" Labour got the stomach to do what it promised a decade ago? M.D. called for heart surgeons to publish their results back in 1992 and now they are, but no-one else is. In 2001, the Kennedy inquiry recommended the number of units performing child heart surgery be reduced from 13 to six to ensure quality and safety. There are still 13, because putting babies at risk is trumped by the political risk of closing a local service.

On 18 July 2001, Alan Milburn promised in the Commons that he would publish "information for patients, and specifically for parents, before consenting to treatment for themselves or their children". To date it has not appeared. If the last 60 years has taught us anything about the NHS, it is that – Nye Bevan aside – politicians can't deliver the hard stuff. Don't give up the day job, Darzi.

M.D.

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

Mr and Mrs Smith

HOSPITAL supremo Derek Smith is an expensive man to employ.

As chief executive of Hammersmith Hospitals, his 35 percent pay rise in 2005 made him the first NHS trust boss to earn more than £200,000 a year. But how much did his recent stint in charge of the University Hospitals of Leicester cost taxpayers?

Despite pleas from new hospital boss Malcolm Lowe-Lauri and from patients' groups, Smith has refused to allow the trust to publish in its accounts the true cost of employing him as interim chief executive.

NHS accounting guidelines say that senior staff should be open about their salaries, but Smith was hired from healthcare consultancy Durrow rather than paid a salary.

Oddly enough, while Smith was at Hammersmith (pictured), the trust hired Durrow as consultants and while he was at Bucks Hospital Trust in 2004, Bucks hired Durrow too. Oh, and Smith's wife Ruth Harrison already worked for Durrow at the time (*Eye* 1172).

It was initially reported that Smith was to receive £100,000 for providing three months' cover at Leicester, following the sudden resignation of the previous chief executive. He prompted fury when he then took off on a three-week holiday to New Zealand after just one week in the job. His contract was then extended for another three months until the permanent chief was available to start work, but how much he was paid remains a secret.

David Gorred, of the *Leicester Mercury* Patients' Panel (set up by the local paper after the hospital's "patient and public involvement forum" was scrapped), said: "It's particularly galling that we can't find out his final remuneration and attendant expenses because it's certainly a substantial chunk of money that would have been for patient services."

PATIENT CHOICE

"...and then there is the Royal Northern who have a 'Buy One Get One Free' offer at the moment"

GP SERVICES

Read his slips

"NO current GP practices will be closed," claimed health secretary Alan Johnson (pictured) in the *Observer* about the government's shake-up of family doctor and primary care services.

Try telling that to more than 100 doctors' practices in and around London, already earmarked for closure to make way for polyclinics. Or to the GP practices which have been swallowed up by the private sector cashing in on so-called Alternative Provider Medical Services Contracts – the new "GP-led" health centres. A further 150 will be coming to a town near you soon, courtesy of health ministers and Virgin, Boots, UnitedHealth, Bupa and a host of other bidders.

At the same time as Johnson's claims, all 31 of London's primary care trusts opted for a network of polyclinics. As well as swallowing up family surgeries, the clinics will lead to hospital closures.

Health ministers and managers would have us believe that drop-in superclinics in every town are what the public want, citing an NHS London survey purporting to show that 51 percent were in favour. However, campaigners at Health Emergency point out that, following the £15m Ipsos Mori "consultation", just 932 people registered support for the doctors operating out of polyclinics, while 966 "tended to agree". In other words, superclinics had the support of just 0.03 percent of London's voters.

By contrast, more than 1m immediately signed a petition organised by the British Medical Association to protect existing NHS general practice. While drop-in centres may work for minor procedures and treatment for self-limiting illnesses, they won't work for those who visit their GPs most often – people with chronic illness and disability, the elderly and parents with young children.

But the government isn't listening to patients, public or staff. Instead it is making sure PCTs bring in its private consultant mates, such as McKinsey, KPMG and UnitedHealth, to help with commissioning. Thus one private company can help buy in health services from another with NHS money. NHS plc indeed.

In the City

UNDER its charismatic new leader Richard Alderman, the Serious Farce Office has embarked on a PR campaign to show it means fraud-busting business. Suddenly interviews and initiatives are everywhere in the wake of the De Grazia demolition report, which found the SFO and much of its top management not fit for purpose.

Not one but two prominent spin-masters have been hired to boost the SFO/Alderman image – hardly surprising, as several present and former insiders claim that Grey Man admits he "has no vision" for the SFO or his role!

So Alderman has recruited former BBC reporter and 2001 Labour candidate Sam Jaffa, an old friend from the Inland Revenue and the short-lived Assets Recovery Agency (ARA), as a key adviser. Jaffa was previously in-house PR/ director of communications for beancounters PricewaterhouseCoopers and then bankers UBS between 1997 and 2002, followed by several months in 2006-07 doing the same at management consultants Capita Advisory Services.

"We're so glad we bought petrol instead of a house"

Between these jobs, his Labour contacts (his wife Celia Barlow is MP for Hove) were probably no handicap when it came to working for John Prescott and the Home Office as well as the Inland Revenue – from where Alderman took over as SFO director. Both men were involved in establishing the ARA, which has now been folded into the Serious Organised Crime Agency (a fate some forecast for the SFO). Most recently Jaffa has been director of communications for R3, which represents insolvency practitioners and is a group Alderman would like to see blowing more whistles to the SFO.

Less prominent in the Jaffa CV is the little matter of the plagiarism suit brought against him in the US courts by American journalists Peter Truell and Larry Gurwin in 2000. They accused Jaffa and his US publisher of "substantial and blatant word-for-word plagiarism" in "no fewer than 44 separate passages" in a 28-page chapter on the Bank of Credit & Commerce International in his 1997 book *Safe as Houses*, which was published in the US as *Great Financial Scandals*. Truell and Gurwin had authored a 1992 book on BCCI. Jaffa denied any plagiarism, and court records show the case was dismissed in 2001 for want of prosecution.

Also called in to help the SFO is Mike Granatt, former head of the Government Information & Communication Service and later the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. In February this year Granatt resigned as spokesman for Commons Speaker Michael Martin for "ethical reasons" after he said he had been misled over £4,000-worth of taxi trips taken by Mrs Martin.

Since 2004, "crisis management" expert Granatt has been a partner in City PR and lobbyist outfit Luther Pendragon, which has been hired by Alderman to review how the SFO can improve its image – other than by getting the handcuffs on senior suits at BAE Systems over Saudi kickbacks, it is assumed.

Just how much all this PR is costing remains to be seen. Luther Pendragon was charging the Commons (ie taxpayers) £25,000 a year for one day a month from Granatt. One hopes the SFO will get better value.

The review of the SFO by lawyer Jessica de Grazia cost £150,000 plus VAT, paid to her investigations company, Interro, according to data released under the freedom of information act. An American lawyer who has lived in London for some years, De Grazia formerly worked for the Manhattan district attorney Robert Morgenthau, whose office is praised generously in her report and with which the SFO is compared as a costly, inefficient failure. Sadly there was insufficient space in the 156-page report to detail her career and achievements with the Manhattan DA.

The SFO review was not put out to tender prior to the announcement in March 2007 – after the Blair-directed dropping of the Saudi corruption case. De Grazia was appointed by the then Attorney General Lord Goldsmith and the then SFO director Robert Wardle, although the choice was probably much more Goldsmith's given that the AG's office has disclosed that he met De Grazia ten times between 2003 and 2007 "to discuss CPS casework". Those meetings took place at the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the AG's office at the House of Lords, the peers' dining room and Shepherd's restaurant, a favourite of politicians and mandarins.

De Grazia toned down her report after meetings with Wardle and Goldsmith's successor, Baroness Scotland. She met the latter last October and on 8 May, after she had delivered a draft report on 28 April. A revised version was handed over on 5 June and was published five days later. It is believed there had been pressure from Wardle to remove what he considered unfair criticisms of himself and some of his assistant directors.

Wardle handed over to Alderman on 21 April. He is still waiting to hear from Whitehall's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments whether and when he will be able to join leading law firm DLA Piper as a consultant. Former senior Crown Prosecution Service lawyer Carmen Dowd, who ran the "cash for honours" prosecution that never was while heading the CPS Special Crime Division, was delayed in joining Peters & Peters, frequent opponents of the SFO, until next month. Dowd successfully overcame and attempt to delay her appointment for a year.

Wardle, unlike Grey Man, was widely observed at a leaving party for three of the six SFO assistant directors – plus deputy director and head of policy – considered surplus to requirements by De Grazia and those to whom she reported. But then one of Alderman's first comments to staff was that what he perceived as the SFO's "drinking culture" was to end. So it was trebles all round.

One good call made by Alderman is that, although he will reach retirement age this year, assistant director Philip Lewis will continue in charge of the NHS generic drug price-fixing prosecution and will advise on training SFO prosecutors – one of the serious shortcomings identified by De Grazia. But then the NHS case is a must-win for the SFO – lose and it could be history – and Lewis's handling of the NHS case was one of the few praised by De Grazia. The SFO team on the NHS case was described as "experienced and able", having made "innovative use of proactive techniques".

The NHS case, begun in 2002, is awaiting trial in two parts, with the latest trial dates April 2009 and April 2010.

Also threatening to run and run for years is the Iraq oil-for–food corruption inquiry into bribes allegedly paid to Saddam Hussein's regime by British drug and engineering companies. Launched in 2007 – more than a year after the same companies were named and shamed in a United Nations report – this is not expected to reach the end of the investigation stage until 2010! Meanwhile, as De Grazia reports, prosecutors in New York have convicted two companies and forced another – Chevron Oil – to pay $27m in restitution to avoid prosecution.

As part of his PR blitz, Alderman is expected to disclose plans shortly for US-style deferred prosecution agreements, whereby companies admit guilt and pay fines to avoid prosecution, in a bid to overcome the SFO's abject failure to bring a single overseas corruption prosecution to date. Whether this gambit will work in Britain is open to debate, given the admitted problems in bringing a successful prosecution – illustrated by BAE and the Energy Financing Team case in the Balkans, plus the delays over Iraq – and the millions companies willingly pay their lawyers to keep out of court.

The timing of this particular piece of consultation is no doubt completely unrelated to this week's SFO appeal to the Law Lords over the high court's stinging criticisms of its Saudi surrender.

WHILE the world waits to see whether the Milan corruption trial David Mills faces with Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi – due to resume this week – will be halted by two proposed immunity laws, lawyers for Mills were busy last month questioning four of his former associates and employees in London.

The quartet were called to give evidence by video link over a full day at City of Westminster magistrates' court about several matters related to the estranged husband of Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell's management of Berlusconi's offshore companies during the 1990s. Questions were raised about the fate of Berlusconi company documents sent to London from Lugano, Switzerland, but not seized during 1996 raids carried out by the SFO. The documents were subsequently sent to Malta and were never obtained by the Italian investigative magistrates.

Berlusconi says he wants to stand trial over the allegation that he paid Mills $600,000 to give favorable testimony in two previous trials despite the Italian parliament, where Berlusconi's coalition has a majority, being expected to pass immunity legislation. Both men deny the charges, which emerged from a statement made by Mills to his accountant – since retracted.

☛ See over...

THE DIRECTORS

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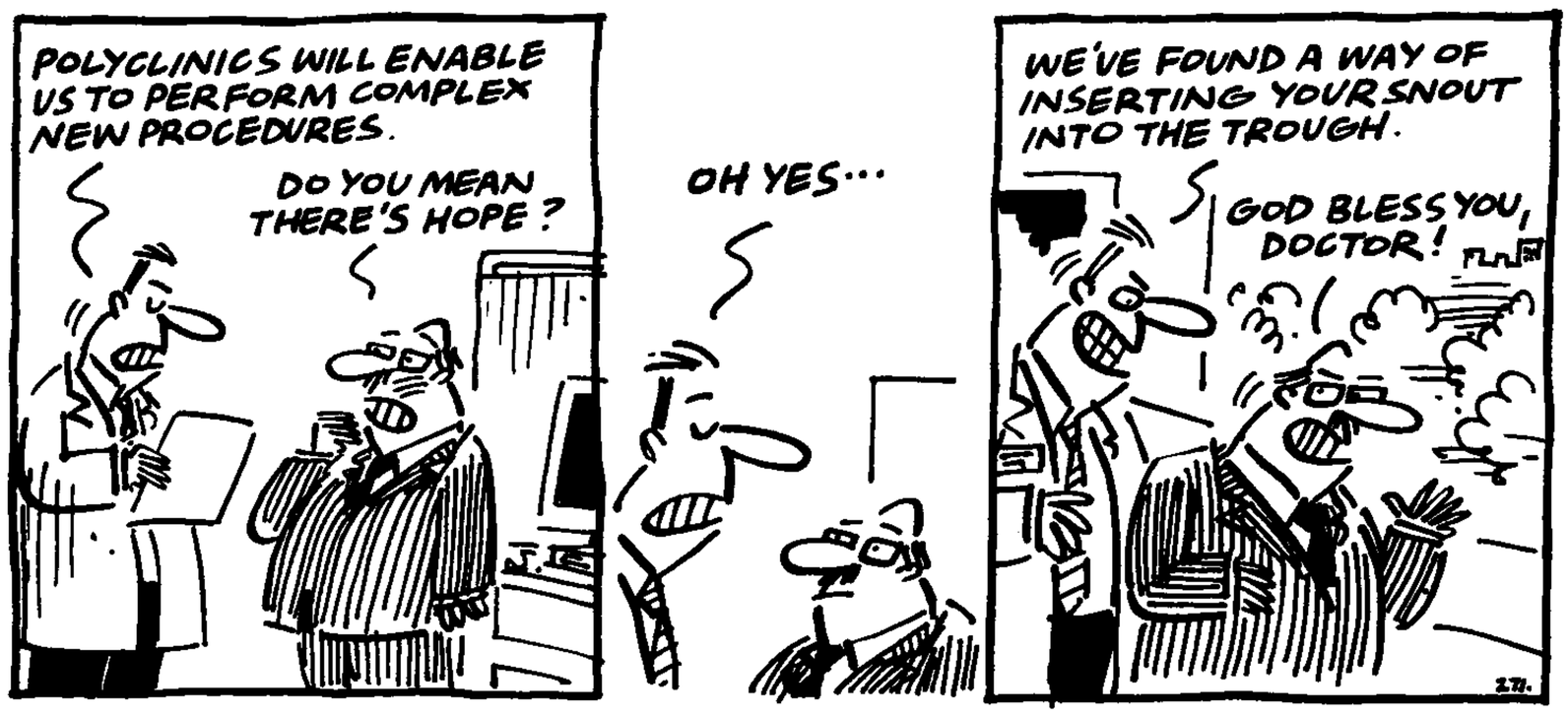

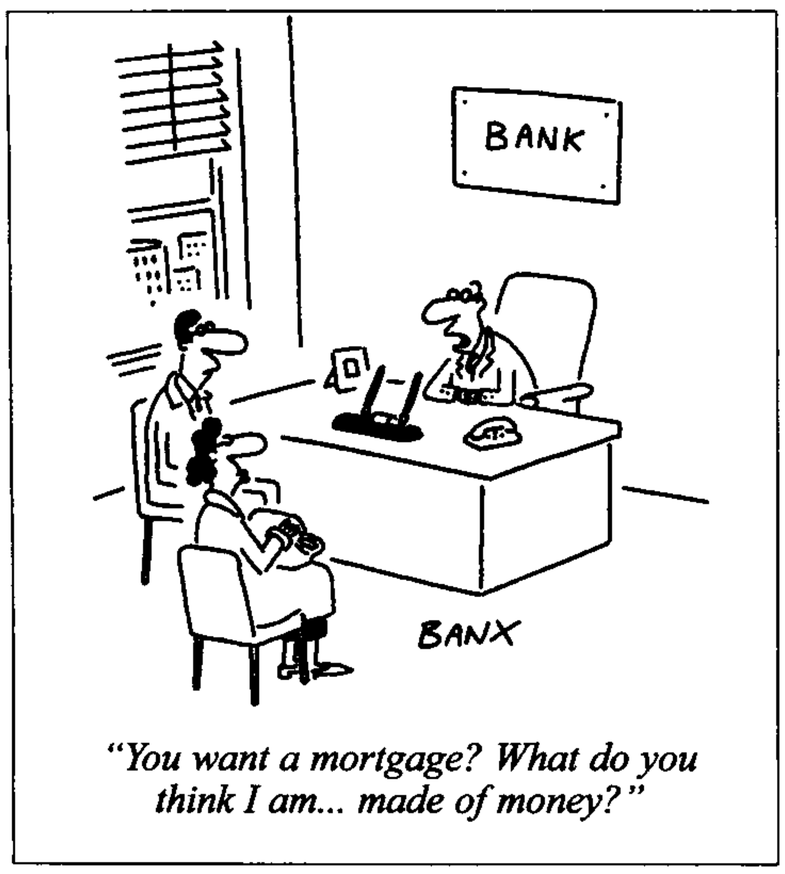

"You want a mortgage? What do you think I am... made of money?"

THE bearded wonder, Richard Branson, is pushing hard to boost his green credentials – perhaps because he owns an airline. Branson has pledged to invest more than $3bn in alternative energy projects and last month raised $199m for the Virgin Green Fund. However, one green project has already produced unwanted embarrassment as a result of his plans to go green by investing in ethanol production.

A company in North Carolina which Virgin backed is at the centre of a corruption prosecution. Virgin Management loaned $205,000 to Agri-Ethanol Products (AEP) in 2006 as part of a $750,000 planned financing. Branson had announced that Virgin Fuels was to invest heavily in ethanol plants producing petrol from corn. AEP claimed it would build a $220m ethanol plant, but it never happened and Virgin sued to get its money back in 2007.

In May a former North Carolina state official, Boyce Hudson, pleaded guilty to trying to extort a $200,000 bribe from AEP in return for a clean-air permit. Although not the target of any criminal investigation or accused of any wrongdoing, Branson has been mentioned in a subpoena issued as part of the federal investigation as being a "relevant party" about whom information was sought. Hudson is due to be sentenced later this month.

DEPARTMENT of You Could Not Make It Up. US authorities are investigating a small energy company, MCube Petroleum, which they suspect of being a $54m "Ponzi" scheme, or circular money fraud, on investors. No charge has yet been brought. MCube offered returns of up to 24 percent a year. MCube's founder is Robert L. Miracle.

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WILLIAM SHAWCROSS,
The Guardian

Submitted by Robert Saunders.

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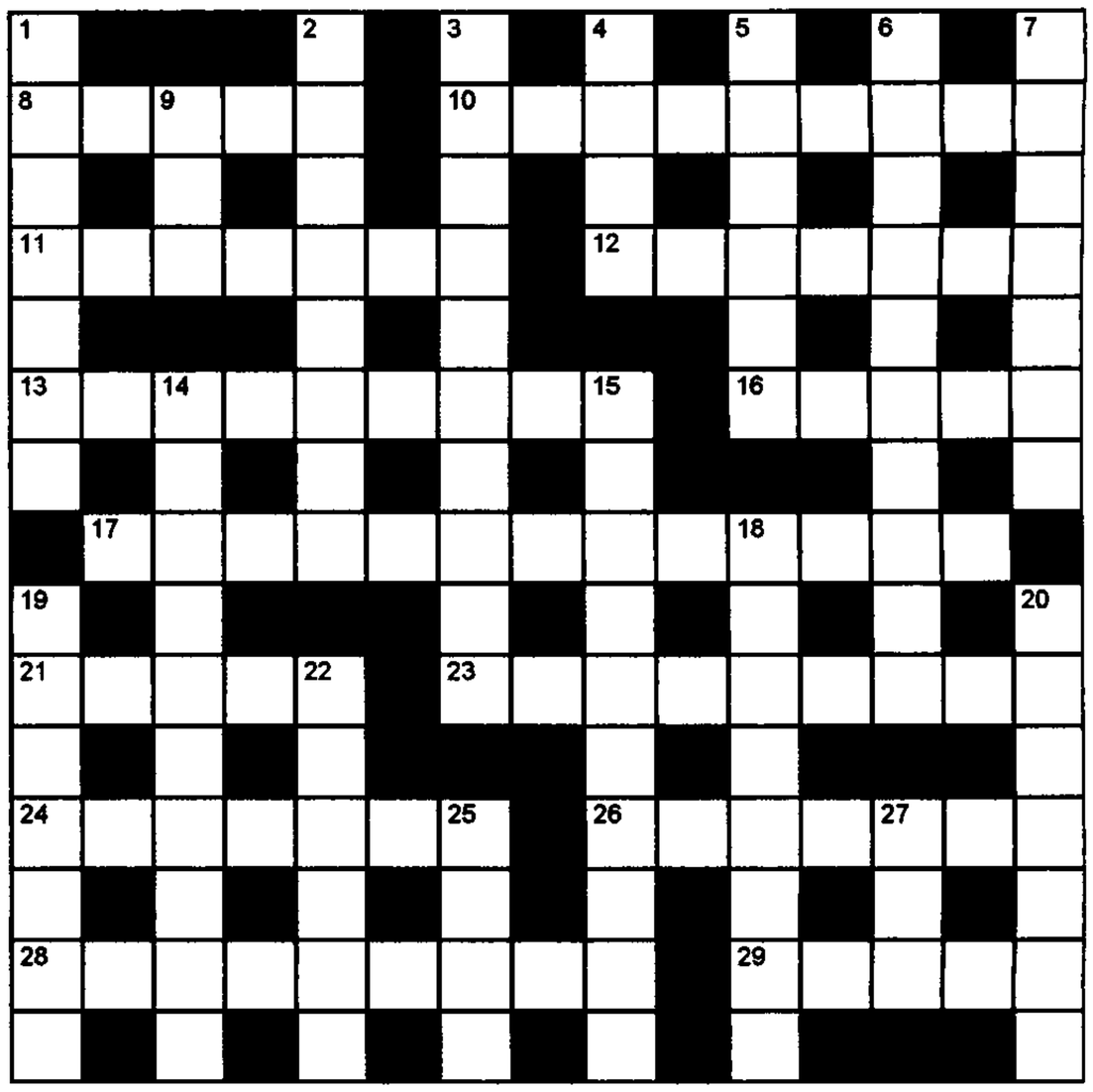

ACROSS

8 Short, Clare: a different woman (5)
10 Was privy to something said of finished (pronouncedly so) Tory grandee (9)
11 Where callous military regime managed to persist (7)
12 A cheeky cover-up (of member, too) (1-6)
13 Aware of the latest article by Ken (2,3,4)
16/25 Brown diminished by turning tide – honour intended (5-2-2)
17 Rich Europe *vis-a-vis* America, as seen in the *Eye* (5,3,5)
21 Contributing to culture, Bush? Poser! (5)
23 But don't expect much reflection from it (3,6)
24 Brook starts to excoriate Tory Thatcher (Margaret) (7)
26 Before Cyclops rubbished pseudo religious organisation (4,3)
28 Nick's bubble burst with a couple of uppers and a bit of a snooze (9)
29 Brilliant, ditching Brown's number one – true? (5)

DOWN

1 Cripes! Boris Johnson seconds changes – 'e's out for a sign! (7)
2 Straw, abandoning right wing, wants an honour, one of a certain period (8)
3 Unhappy, furthermore exposed as gay on the street (4,3,3)
4 Crony of Blair, very into the mystical line (4)
5 Sweet little innocent, Blair? Not that is with unemployment benefit reduced (6)
6 Trial by one who could make you stiff, a provider of relief (10)
7 'Yes' sod off at start of year for an epic tour (7)
9/15 Outspoken princess fair, this politician? Well, the first bit, anyway (3,10)
14 Digital number/cruncher made by Tom and Roger (10)
15 See 9dn.
18 Notice a Tory outed along with university's principal – guards not entirely straight (8)
19 Collared by windy cabby, Roy loses heart – wimp! (7)
20 Weakness Bill dramatically named as "Woman" (7)
22 Hassle a zealot harbouring many a politician's trait? (6)
25 See 16ac.
27 Gordon messed up, not "right on" – follow? (3)

Crossword 368 winner: ROBIN CHAPMAN

ACROSS: 8 Labouring 9 FA Cup 11 Greek 12 Doorsteps 13 Ferrari 15 Ethical 17 Doing a U-turn 21 Tear gas 23 The Pope 24 Happy hour 26 Adolf 28 Nutty 29 Piss-taker.

DOWN: 1 Slag off 2 Oboe 3 Muckraking 4 Piddling 5 Ignore 6 UFOs 7 Apostle 10 Crescendo 14 Red carpet 16 House party 18 Upthrust 19 Etching 20 Perform 22 Sloppy 25 Yo-yo 27 Oiks.

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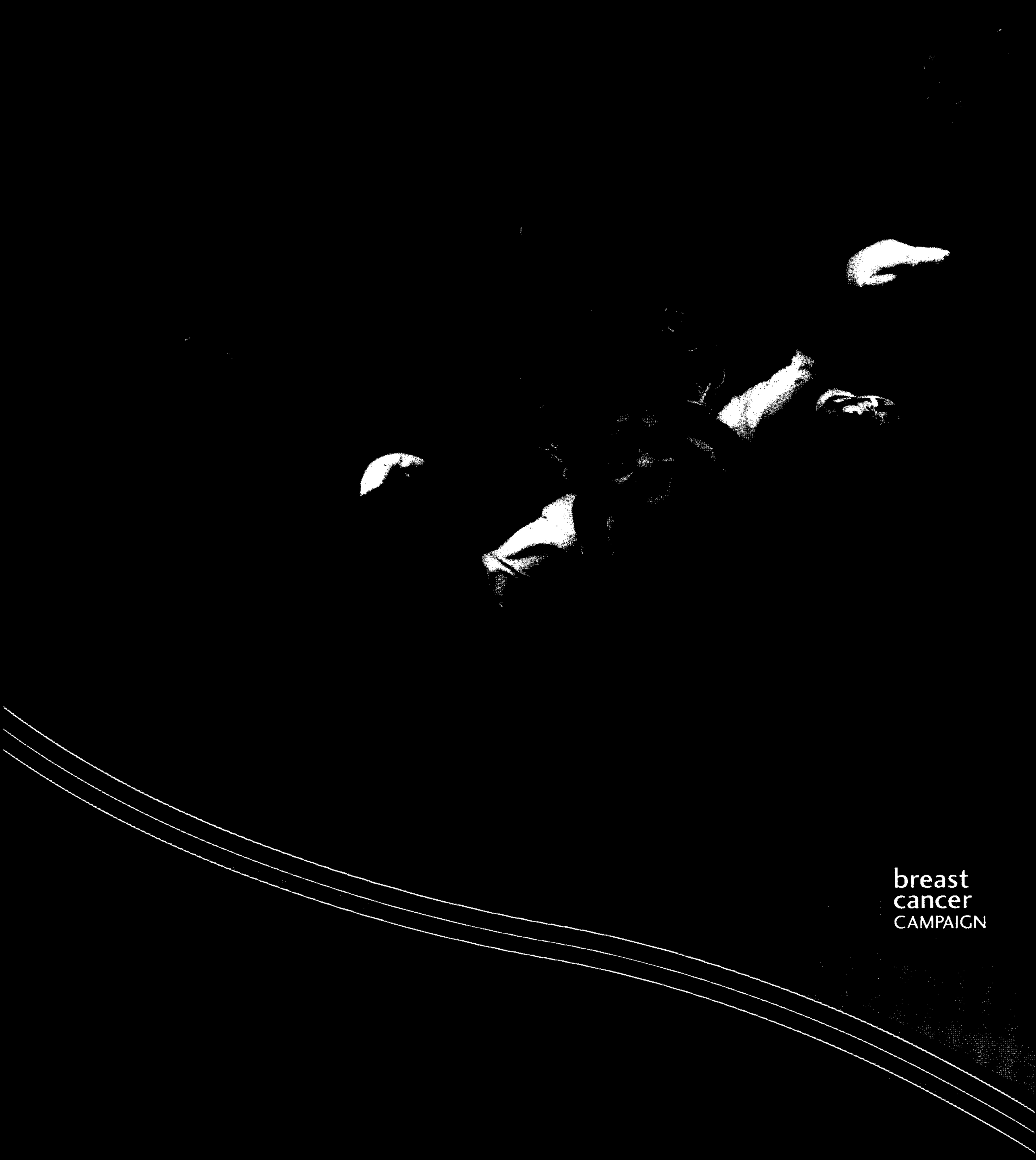

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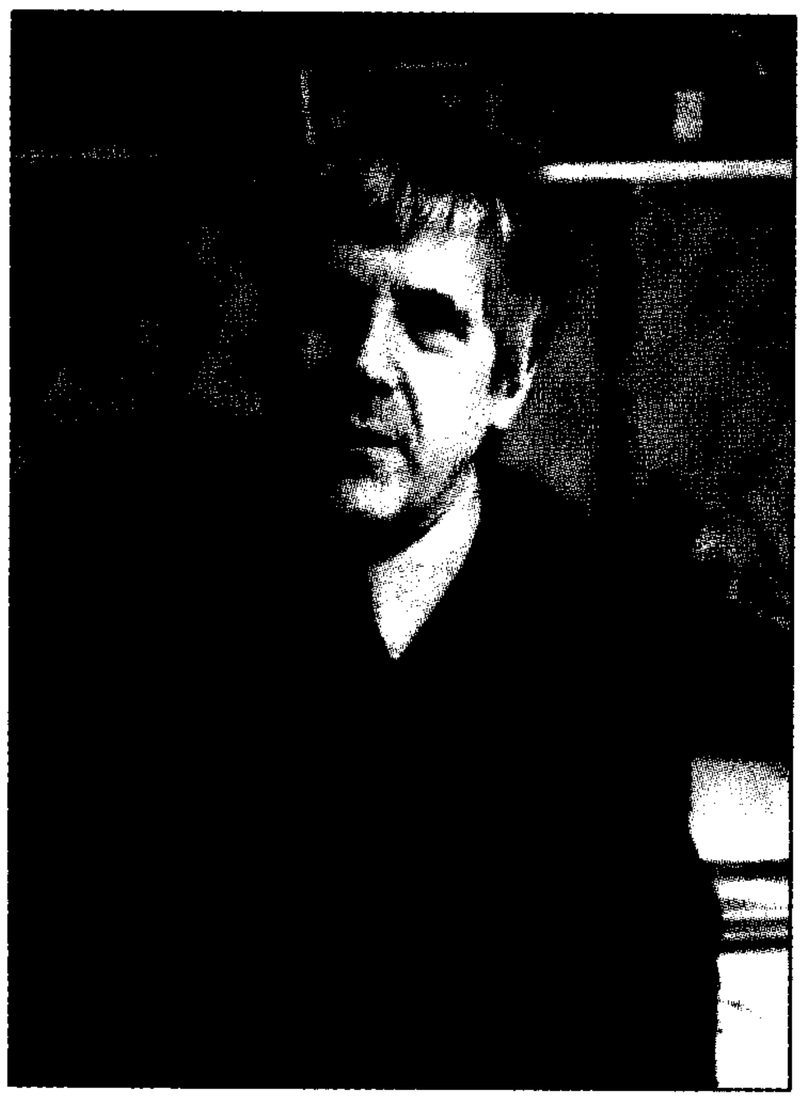

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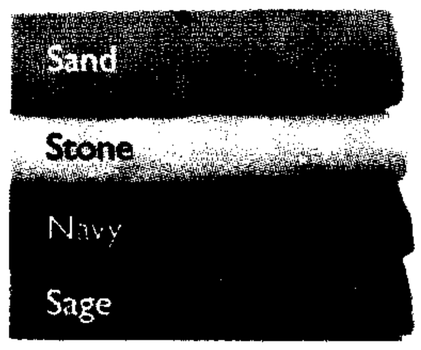

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OM SAI RAM

A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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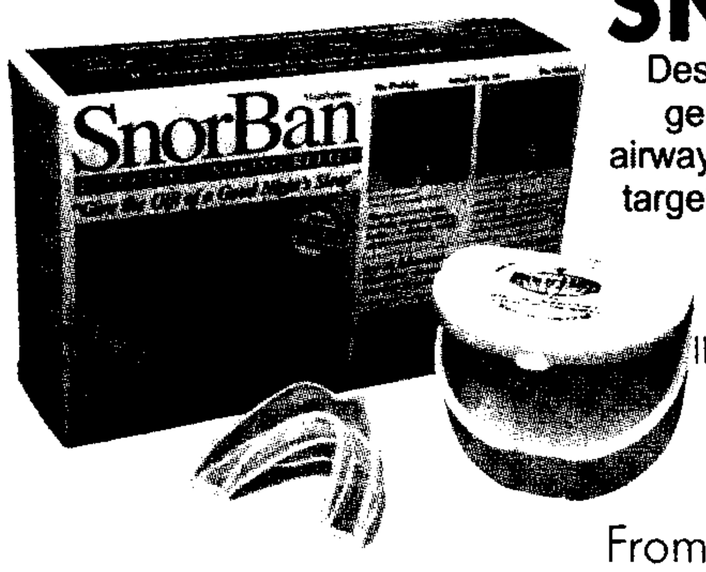

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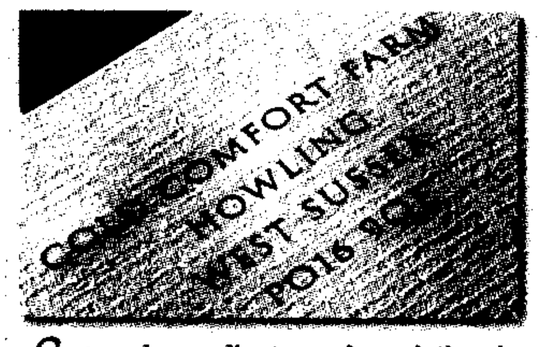

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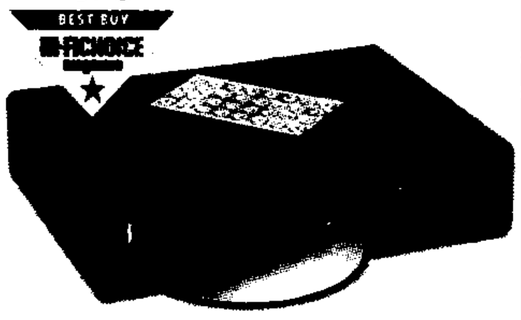

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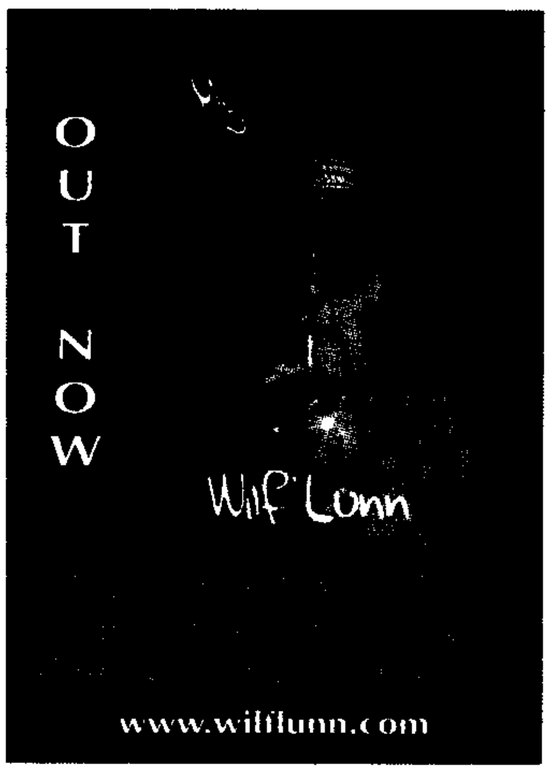

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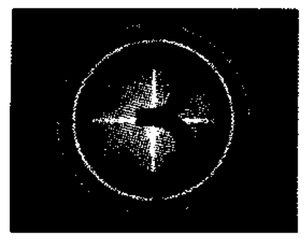

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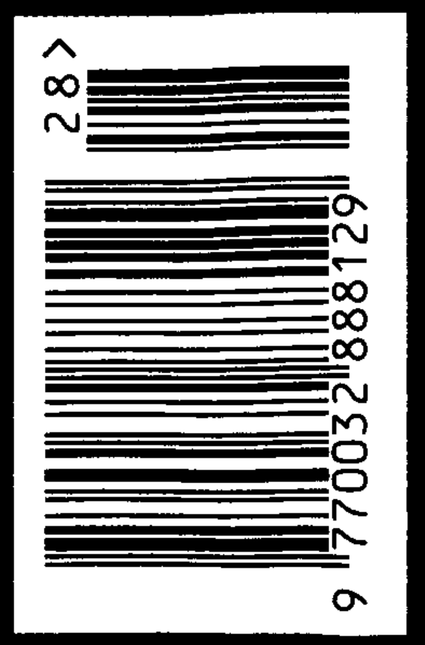
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